Subjugated Nomads

The Lambadas under the Rule of the Nizams

Bhangya Bhukya

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The external boundary and coastline of India as depicted in the map in this book are neither correct nor authentic.

To
my mother
Baju Bai

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Preface

This book deals with the historical transition of the Lambada community of Hyderabad State during colonial rule.[1] The Lambadas originated as caravan trading communities in medieval India.[2] The colonial market economy, trade regulations and the growth of modern transport hobbled their long-established caravan trade. From the middle of the nineteenth century, they were compelled to depend on various other sources of livelihood such as cattle-raising, agriculture and agricultural labour. The deployment of rules, regulations and laws based on the new colonial political rationality badly hampered their cattle-raising and agricultural practices. The state discouraged the nomadic lifestyle of the Lambadas, inducing them in many ways to become settled peasant subjects. The revenue and agricultural policies introduced by the state involved harsh exploitation, and this gradually reduced the Lambadas to working as labourers in the dominant peasants' fields.[3] During famines and the off-season, they had to resort to dacoity. This led the state to brand them as a criminal community,

1 In the government records Lambada community was described with different names, particularly in Hyderabad State's records, as *Lambadies/Lambadas, Binjaries/Banjaras, Lamanis, Wanjaris, Madhura Banjaras, Charan Banjaras* and *Sugalis*. We shall be using the term 'Lambada(s)' for consistency.

2 Irfan Habib, 'Merchant Communities in Precolonial India', in *The Rise of Merchant Empire: Long-Distance Trade in the Early Modern World, 1350–1750*, ed. James. D Tracy (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 371–399.

3 Edward Balfour, *On the Ethnology of Hyderabad in the Dekhan* (Madras: Adelphi, 1871), 12–13; also see Laxman. D Satya, 'Colonial Sedentarisation

and a range of methods were used to curb their dacoity.[4] On the whole, the deployment of a colonial-style political rationality by the Hyderabad government reduced the Lambadas to subalternity. The Lambadas responded through a programme of self-reform that would allow the community to face the challenges posed by the new system. From the 1820s, reformers emerged from within the community, who rearticulated Lambada history and culture, borrowing 'ruling values', which produced a distinct consciousness among members of the community. However, the long-established cultural and spiritual values of the community remained fundamental in the articulation of the new consciousness and identity.[5]

The cardinal theme of the book is to examine the ways in which the Lambadas' longstanding livelihood practices were disturbed during the colonial period, their being reduced to subalternity, and how from this subalternity a form of consciousness emerged, which played a crucial role in shaping their modern community identity that has come to stay as a significant element in the democratic politics of postcolonial India.

The book will cover a time-span from the early eighteenth century to 1948—the period of the Nizam rulers of Hyderabad State. The main focus will be on the period that starts with the Commercial Treaty of 1802 when the Nizam allied officially with the British. The geographical area that is covered includes the whole of Hyderabad State (the Nizam's Dominions), excluding the Berar districts, which were under the direct rule of the British from 1853. The choice of period and area allows us to examine the impact of a coherent polity on the Lambadas.

Hyderabad State, called the *Deccan Suba* under Mughal rule, emerged as an independent state under the Nizams after the decline of the Mughals. Once British rule was entrenched elsewhere in India, this state was gradually brought under British suzerainty,

and Subjugation: The case of the Banjaras of Berar, 1850–1900', *The Journal of Peasant Studies* 24, no. 4, July 1997, 314–336.

4 David Arnold, 'Dacoity and Rural Crime in Madras, 1860–1940', *The Journal of Peasant Studies* 6, no. 2, January 1979, 140–167.

5 Syed Mahdi Ali, com., *Hyderabad Affairs*, 10 vols. (Bombay: The Times of India Steam Press, 1883–89), V: 331.

becoming what was called a 'Princely State.' Under this system of 'indirect rule', local rulers were honoured with a throne and titles such as the 'Star of India', while being monitored and regulated by representatives of the colonial power, known as Residents, who lived at the capital city . This system of indirect rule was one of the expedients through which the colonial state maintained its control over India. There were many other allied but subsidiary forces like *zamindars*, *jagirdars* and local landlords who were instrumental in the establishment and maintenance of colonial rule. The rajas and nawabs proved to be the most faithful ally of the colonial power, and their regimes ended with its demise in India.[6]

It has been argued that the princely states were backward enclaves that kept alive a feudal polity characterised by autocracy and underdevelopment, while British colonial India moved towards modernity and capitalist development.[7] The reality was different. While the princes appeared to embody an Oriental past in their courtly and private lives, [8] the general apparatus of governance was honed under the guidance of the Residents and British officials towards the model that prevailed in the British-controlled areas of India. Recent studies have shown how the ideological boundaries between the princely states and British territories were fluid, and that there was cross-pollination between their socio-cultural and political issues and movements.[9]

Colonial ideology and modes of power gradually permeated south Asia, irrespective of whether an area was directly and indirectly ruled. Colonial laws, rules and regulations were adapted to the princely states. Hyderabad, the largest princely state in India, had particularly close relations with the British establishment. Even

6 Ian Copland, *The Princes of India in the Endgame of Empire, 1917–1947* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 286–287; Benjamin B. Cohen, *Kingship and Colonialism in India's Deccan: 1850–1948* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007); see also Shail Mayaram, *Against History, Against State: Counterperspectives from the Margins* (Delhi: Permanent Black, 2003), 200–08.

7 Ibid., 202.

8 Copland, *The Princes of India*, 12.

9 Manu Bhagvan has brought out how the Baroda and Mysore states were greatly influenced by the colonial apparatus of governance. See his *Sovereign Spheres: Princes, Education and Empire in Colonial India* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2003); also see Copland, *The Princes of India*.

when British laws were not formally extended there (in many cases they were), the influence of their implementation in the surrounding British territories had a profound impact. Some portions of the state were also under the direct control of the British Residents for the maintenance of the Residency, the Hyderabad Contingency, and the railways, and British law applied there. Although the laws of Hyderabad State differed in their particulars from British laws, they shared the same spirit and ideology. There was thus little significant distinction in the forms of political rationality deployed in the two areas. Although colonial-style governance was developed in Hyderabad from the beginning of the nineteenth century, it grew to importance only from about the middle of that century.[10] Civil servants of the state, after their selection for the Hyderabad Civil Service would undergo two years' training. In the first year, they had to take a course at the Nizam College in Hyderabad, which was attached to the Madras University, a colonial institution. In the second year, they were sent to British India for practical training under the British officers and had to appear for the departmental examination, most of the department's secretaries and the boards' directors and commissioners being British.[11] From the middle of the nineteenth century, the state thus increasingly came under the influence of colonialism, and the economy and polity were largely restructured on the colonial model.

10 On the history of Hyderabad State see Hastings Fraser, *Our Faithful Ally the Nizam: An Historical Sketch of Events, Showing the Value of the Nizam's Alliance to the British Government and His Services During the Mutinies* (London: Smith, Elder and Co., 1865); G. B. Malleson, *An Historical Sketch of the Native States of India: In Subsidiary Alliance with the British Government* (London: Longman, Green, and Co., 1875); Bharati Ray, *Hyderabad and British Paramountcy, 1858–1883* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1988); Sheela Raj, *Mediaevalism to Modernism: Socio-Economic and Cultural History of Hyderabad, 1869–1911* (Bombay: Popular Prakash, 1987); Sarojini Regani, *Nizam-British Relations, 1724–1857* (Secunderabad: Swarajya Printing Work, 1963); V. K Bawa, *The Last Nizam: The Life and Times of Mir Osman Alli Khan* (New Delhi: Penguin, 1992); Y. Vaikuntham, *State, Economy and Social Transformation: Hyderabad State, 1724–1948* (New Delhi: Manohar, 2002).

11 *Report of the Salaries Commission of Gazetted Officers, 1329–1330 F (1919–20). H.E.H. the Nizam's Government* (Hyderabad-Dn.: Government Press, 1927), 3.

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This book originated from my PhD dissertation submitted to the Department of History, University of Warwick, UK, and it would scarcely be possible to acknowledge all the institutions, teachers and friends whose support and encouragement have been crucial not only to complete my higher studies but also in developing important ideas in this book. I was born to illiterate Lambada parents in a remote Lambada thanda, which did not even have an approachable road till recently. I began my life as a cowherd as many children in poor peasant families do. Thanks to the Indian Government's mid-day meals programme I was attracted to the village school, for then I was assured of at least one meal a day. My journey from a Lambada thanda to the United Kingdom is indeed a landmark in the liberation struggle of the *adivasis* of India. It would not have been possible without the support, inspiration and encouragement from my teachers right from primary school. I am grateful to all my teachers who made my life a success.

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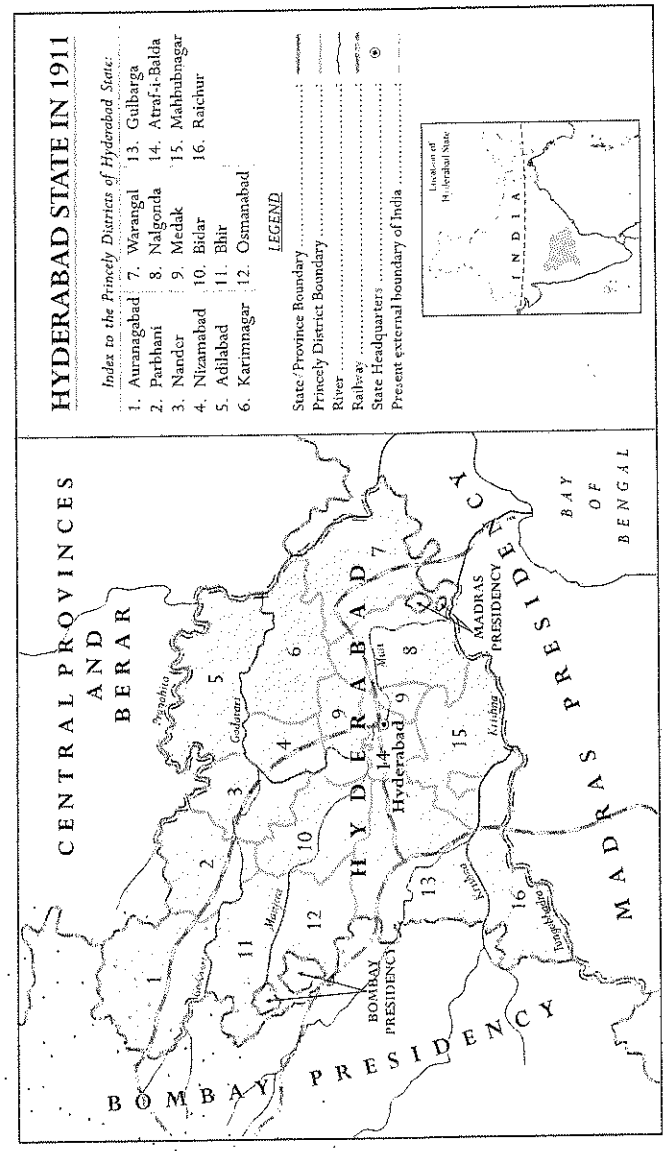
Note on Translation

The material used in this book was sourced principally from English, Urdu, Telugu, Kannada and Lambada. The translations from Telugu and Lambada are my own, but I took assistance for translating the Urdu and Kannada material. However, I am solely responsible for the arguments put forward in this book. All the non-English words used in this book have been, in the first instance, italicised and the English equivalents given in brackets. A glossary of the non-English words has been given. For the *Fasli* or *Hijara* year in respect of most of the Nizam Government's records and proceedings, the equivalent Christian year has been given in brackets.

Abbreviations

APSA	Andhra Pradesh State Archives
AND	Andhra Mahasabha
AIBSS	All India Banjara Seva Sangh
AP	Andhra Pradesh
CID	Criminal Investigation Department
CI	Circle Inspector
CTA	Criminal Tribes Act
com.	compilation
CPI	Communist Party of India
F	Fasli
GIP	Great Indian Peninsular
HGV	Hyderabad Godavari valley
HRR	Hyderabad Residency Records
H	Hijara
IOL/IOR	India Office Library /Records
IGP	Inspector General of Police
Inst.	Instalment
misce.	miscellaneous
NAI	National Archives of India
NCD	Nizam Custom Department
NRAD	Nizam Revenue and Agriculture Department
NJD	Nizam Judicial Department
NHD	Nizam Home Department

NFD	Nizam Forest Department
orig	original
repr.	reprinted
trans.	translation



Map of Hyderabad State in 1911, showing districts.

Source: Adapted from India Administrative Atlas, 1872–2001, *A Historical Perspective, Census of India 2001*.

Introduction

> Maybe what is really important for our modernity—that is, for our present—is not so much the *étatisation* of society, as the 'governmentalisation' of the state.
>
> Michel Foucault[1]

Under colonial rule, the relatively autonomous and self-sufficient Indian communities lost their main means of livelihood and had to depend on new occupations.[2] The market economy and political rationality introduced by the British in India sought to achieve certain modes of training and modification of individuals, not only in the obvious sense of acquiring certain skills but also in the sense of adopting certain attitudes.[3] Colonial rule, indeed, created a condition in which communities not only adopted an alternative source of livelihood but also different cultural values. It is in this context that the above remarks on modernity by

1 Michel Foucault, 'Governmentality', in *The Foucault Effect: Studies in Governmentality with Two Lectures by and an Interview with Michel Foucault*, eds. Graham Burchell, Colin Gordon and Peter Miller (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991), 103.

2 R. P. Dutt, *India Today*, repr. (Calcutta: Manisha Granthalaya, 1989), 84–96.

3 Eric Stokes, *The English Utilitarians and India* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1959), introduction.

Foucault are important . The main concern of this book is not the domination of colonial state power but the practices, modalities, and projects through which such power entered into the lives of the colonised at an everyday level.

The ways in which the British imposed their power over the people of India and the latter's response has been studied in a number of ways over the past half century. Until the 1970s, the emphasis in most studies of British colonialism in India was on the development of government policies, debates amongst officials and the critiques advanced by Indian nationalist leaders. Many saw colonialism as implementing the ideas of the European enlightenment: rationalism, utilitarianism, secularism and market values derived from Adam Smith. Eric Stokes, in his classic work on British rule in early nineteenth- century India, sought to show how the new class that had emerged in Britain with the industrial revolution imposed its utilitarian doctrines on India from the 1830s onwards in ways that transformed the subcontinent. He argued that the change of the Englishman from nabob to sahib was fundamentally an English, not an Indian, phenomenon.[4] Although scholars such as Stokes often highlighted the gap between the liberal principles of the British and their government of a colonised society, little attempt was made to analyse how colonialism specifically affected the mass of the people. With the inauguration of Subaltern Studies in 1982, the agency and response of subordinate groups was brought into the limelight to a much greater degree.[5] The task that was set by Subaltern Studies—to write the history of the subordinated people of South Asia—was a massive one, that was still in its early stages when the project itself was diverted, to a large extent, in the late 1980s, into other, more poststructuralist channels.[6] There is, in my opinion, still an ongoing need for a history of subordinate castes and communities that brings out, in new and more detailed ways, their encounter with, and experience of, colonialism and its methods of power and domination.

4 Ibid., xi–xvi.

5 See Ranajit Guha, ed., *Subaltern Studies I–VI: Writings on South Asian History and Society* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1982–89).

6 See Gayatri Chakravarty Spivak, 'Subaltern Studies: Deconstructing Historiography', in Guha ed., *Subaltern Studies IV* 1985, 330–363.

From the 1980s, a serious effort has been made by a group of historians to study the socio-economic and political transformation of Indian society in the early colonial period, specifically in the eighteenth and first half of the nineteenth century. Among them, C. A. Bayly, David Washbrook, Frank Perlin and Burton Stein are important figures. Although there are some differences in their analytical framework, they share a belief that the eighteenth century was a period of transition from the old regimes in various parts of the subcontinent to the colonial regimes which were to dominate Indian history for the next century; each also considers the eighteenth century as a time of economic vigour, even development. They also regard the early colonial regimes as continuations of the prior indigenous systems in the subcontinent, colonial society and polity being significantly shaped by pre-colonial developments, with colonialism representing more of an evolutionary rather than a revolutionary process.[7]

For Bayly, who strongly argues the case for such continuity, the late pre-colonial and the early colonial periods saw a restructuring of the Indian economy and polity in tune with many long-established Indian practices.[8] This development produced powerful mercantile and service-gentry classes in the urban centres that were allied with the colonisers, while in the rural areas many existing elites found new ways of consolidating and extending their powers. These groups later came to play a dominant role in the development of new forms of urban and rural capitalism as the subcontinent was incorporated into the capitalist world system.[9] British colonial rule thus furthered the growth of a capitalism that had already been set in motion in India. In his recent work, Bayly connects the sequence

7 For instance, see C. A. Bayly, *Rulers, Townsmen, and Bazaars:North Indian Society in the Age of British Expansion* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1983); Bayly, *Indian Society and the Making of the British Empire* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998); David Washbrook, 'Progress and Problems: South Asian Economic and Social History 1720–1860', *Modern Asian Studies* 22, no. 1, 1988, 57–96; Burton Stein, 'State Formation and Economy Reconsidered: Part One', *Modern Asian Studies* 19, no. 3, 1985, 387–413; Frank Perlin, 'State Formation Reconsidered: Part Two', *Modern Asian Studies* 19, no. 3 1985, 415–480.

8 Bayly, *Rulers, Townsmen*, 473–490.

9 Bayly, *Indian Society*, 202–203.

of Indian colonial political and economic development with those occurring at the same time in Europe, and in Britain in particular. He argues that the period 1765–1860 was one of military-fiscalism, with an emphasis on free trade and a restricted view of state power. Although Britain disarmed itself to some extent after 1815, this tendency predominated till around 1860, when the state began to both decentralise its power and construct a new, more meritocratic bureaucracy. The same sequence was, he says, followed in the Indian colony.[10] Also from around 1860, the colonial state began involving itself more centrally in the economy, particularly in agriculture, so as to meet the raw material crisis of the industries in the mother country caused by the American Civil War. So, according to him, the Indian colony came under strong British control only from around 1870.[11] Bayly argues that the empire and state remained limited political entities in India, and it was the Indian capitalists, peasant colonists and junior administrators who played a vital role in subordinating the tribal and nomadic peoples to the discipline of production for the market.[12]

In a similar vein, Frank Perlin and Burton Stein have argued that political institutions and forms of patrimonial loyalty that were associated with the Mughals and rulers of Vijaynagar continued into the middle of the nineteenth century, becoming enmeshed with Western ideas and practices in a unique way.[13] Perlin thus states that 'the early colonial state is simply a prolongation of the old-order polity, another regime of the old and native type, as it were; instead, its origins, international linkages and colonial status give it a quite unprecedented character, despite use of old-order institutions and its social underpinnings in the societies concerned.'[14] Stein demonstrates that Thomas Munro, who served the East India Company from 1780 to1827, borrowed his revenue administration from Haider Ali of Mysore.[15] In this schema, David Washbrook says

10 Bayly, *Origins of Nationality in South Asia: Patriotism and Ethical Government in the Making of Modern India* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1998), 286–291.

11 Bayly, *Indian Society*, 202–203.

12 Ibid., 6, 13.

13 Stein, 'State Formation and Economy', 387–413; Perlin, 'State Formation Reconsidered', 415–480.

14 Perlin., 477.

15 Stein. 411.

that 'rather than representing a set of governing principles imported from a foreign and 'more advanced' culture, the early East Indian Company state might be seen as a logical extension of processes with distinctively 'indigenous' origins.'[16]

This revisionist school holds that Indian economic and political institutions were transforming themselves from the late seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, as dynamic regional economies emerged based on strong centralising states such as those of the Marathas, Mysore, Vijayanagar and the Nizam. When the British took the reins and gradually defeated or co-opted these powers, they built on what had already been achieved. They did not therefore transform Indian society so much as adapt it and mould it to their ends. This school of thinking emerged as a reaction to Andre Gunder Frank and Emmanuel Wallerstein's 'world system theory', which held that a world system originated in the sixteenth century, as Europeans spread throughout the globe, in which Europe remained at the core and the rest of the world was peripheral as dependent economies that were characterised by exploitation and poverty.[17] In its engagement with the world system theory, the revisionist school have endeavoured to reduce the significance of the colonial impact.

A different approach to the relationship between colonialism and local power has been adopted by Ranajit Guha, who sees this as one of collaboration between a modern state and the existing feudal and semi-feudal elites. In return for their support, the colonial state left the power of punishment, that ultimate weapon, with the rural elite in the name of respect for indigenous tradition. The latter dispensed criminal and civil justice from their *kachari* (court) and *gadi* (fort-like house) or, as in the case of dominant castes, through village *panchayats* (jury) that they controlled. The collusion between

16 Washbrook, 'Progress and Problems', 57–96; also see Washbrook, 'South Asia, the World System, and World Capitalism', *The Journal of Asian Studies* 49, no. 3, 1990, 4779–5080; also see Washbrook, 'Political Change in a Stable Society: Tanjore District 1880 to1920', in *South India: Political Institutions and Political Change 1880–1940*, eds. C.J. Baker . Washbrook, (Delhi: The Macmillan Company of India Limited, 1975), 20–68.

17 Washbrook, 'South Asia, the World System', 4779–5080; for the original argument see Immanuel Wallerstein, *The Modern World System I: Capitalist Agriculture and the Origins of the European World-economy in the Sixteenth Century* (London: Academic Press, 1974), 300–344.

government and *zamindar* (landlord) was a common experience for the poor and the subaltern at the local level nearly everywhere.[18] Guha thus suggests that the colonial power operated in alliance with the traditional local powers.

Going on from this, Guha argues that the colonial power achieved 'domination without hegemony.' He says that 'there were vast areas in the life and consciousness of the people which were never integrated into their (colonial) hegemony.'[19] According to him, power generally constitutes domination (which includes coercion and persuasion) and subordination (which expresses itself as collaboration and resistance), and hegemony stands for the condition of dominance such that, in its organic composition, persuasion outweighs coercion. This schema differs from society to society and from event to event according to the organic composition of dominance and subordination. In colonial India, Guha says, these elements affected politics generally and did not operate singly. Moreover, the idioms of dominance and subordination were largely the fusion of indigenous elements established over a historical period. Therefore, according to him, there was no British colonial hegemony but only dominance.[20] In contrast to this, Hardiman argued that the colonial state imposed its hegemony over the colonised by operating through local powers. In a study of rural usury in western India, he argues that the practice of usury was transformed by policies implemented by the East India Company in the early nineteenth century, so that a new form of domination was achieved that built on existing idioms of power, but which depended crucially on the enforcement of colonial law and judicial power.[21] He shows how hegemony was maintained in most instances by the usurers without the need for direct coercion by emphasizing the naturalness of their superiority, their morality, demands for loyalty from individual clients, and by acting occasionally with generosity.[22]

18 Ranajit Guha, *Elementary Aspects of Peasant Insurgency in Colonial India* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1983), 7.

19 Guha, *Dominance without Hegemony: History and Power in Colonial India* (Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1997), preface, xii.

20 Guha, *Dominance without Hegemony*, 20–24.

21 David Hardiman, *Feeding the Baniya: Peasants and Usurers in Western India* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1996), 43–61.

22 Ibid., 324.

Although orthodox Marxian approaches highlight the profoundly transformative agenda of colonialism, they fail to address many of the problems associated with such a process. It is assumed that, in time, capitalist forms of economic organisation, political organisation and rationality will prevail, drawing the mass of the people into the new society. Only then will they be in a position to organise an effective resistance that will give birth to a more revolutionary society.[23] In such a light, peasant resistance is considered 'backward,' 'pre-political,' and informed by a primitive consciousness.[24] This theory was sharply criticised by the Subaltern Studies group, who see the subaltern peasant's resistance as 'political' in that it had its own agenda for an alternative form of political power. Particularly Guha, in his *Elementary Aspects of Peasant Insurgency in Colonial India*, suggested that peasant politics was politically constructed, evolving its own rationality, community solidarity and consciousness. Guha argued that:

> (subaltern) insurgency affirmed its political character precisely by its negative and invasive procedure. By trying to force a mutual substitution of the dominant and the dominated in the power structure it left nothing to doubt about its own identity as a project of power...More often than not it lacked neither in leadership nor in aim nor even in some rudiments of a programme.[25]

This methodology inaugurated a completely different understanding of the subaltern peasantry and had a profound influence on subsequent studies.

Other leading scholars associated with Subaltern Studies have developed these themes in new ways. In *The Nation and its Fragments*, Partha Chatterjee has asked some significant questions about colonial political rationality, in the process departing from much conventional history writing that makes the post-colonial world a perpetual consumer of modernity, and Europe and America

23 John T. Chalcraft, 'Pluralizing Capital, Challenging Eurocentrism: Towards Post-Marxist Historiography', *Radical History Review*, 91, Winter, 2005, 15.

24 E. J. Hobsbawm, *Bandits* (London: Ebenezer Baylis and Son Limited, 1969), 96.

25 Guha, *Elementary Aspects*, 9–10.

the only true subjects of history.[26] He sees colonial power as significantly different from that of the modern, or the 'European', state. The defining signifier of this rule of difference is race.[27] He says that 'the more the logic of a modern regime of power pushed the processes of government in the direction of a rationalisation of administration and the normalisation of the objects of its rule, the more insistently did the issue of race come up to emphasise the specifically colonial character of British dominance in India.'[28] For him, thus, the stated liberal principles of the colonial regime were negated by considerations of race.

Dipesh Chakrabarty has examined the relationship between colonialism and capitalism. In this context, it should be noted that when we talk about capitalism, it need not necessarily be the classic industrial form, as analysed by Marx, which hardly existed in colonial India.[29] Colonial India had a completely different set of production and exploitation practices. In his *Provincializing Europe*, in a bid to escape from developmentalism, economic determinism and historicism, Chakrabarty has attempted to demonstrate plural histories of colonial capitalism in India, drawing insights from the narrative of the Bengali urban middle class as well as the rural subaltern class. His study is mainly aimed at arriving at an alternative understanding of colonialism in terms of two histories, which he labels 'History One' and 'History Two.' He argues that History One is the analytic and critical history of the reproduction of the life process of capital that is written under the sign of Marx. History Two is hermeneutic and multiple, and involves the particularities of very diverse histories of belonging and dwelling within the space of political modernity. For him, History Two is written under the sign of Heidegger. The two histories do not remain separate, but exist alongside each other and in continuing interaction. History Two is either neutral or oppositional to History One, and it constantly

26 Partha Chatterjee, *The Nation and its Fragments: Colonial and Post-colonial Histories* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993), 5.

27 Ibid., 14.

28 Ibid., 19.

29 In the Marxist tradition, capitalist production means the application of capital stock (accumulated labour) to the production and circulation of commodities for sale on the market, an application especially involving the exploitation of legally free wage labour. See Chalcraft, 'Pluralizing Capital', 15.

interrupts the latter's totalising narrative thrust, modifying it and thereby giving grounds for claims of historical difference.[30] Further, he says:

> The idea of History Two allows us to make room, in Marx's own analytic of capital, for the politics of human belonging and diversity. It gives us a ground on which to situate our thoughts about multiple ways of being human and their relationship to the global logic of capital, on which Marx did not put his head.[31]

As he has stated in another work, capitalist forms of rational political organisation have co-existed and continue to co-exist alongside other forms (subaltern) that are just as 'modern' though not capitalistic as such. [32]

As John T. Chalcraft has argued, while Marx speaks of multiple existence of capital, the life process of his capital did retain universality and singularity.[33] In this sense, Chakrabarty appears to retain the 'universality of the capital' by finding room in Marxian capital for difference. The possible interrupting and modifying character of History Two suggests a way towards universal capital, which has been generated by discourses of liberal colonist and liberal nationalist histories in order to promote their expansionist and bourgeois politics. The same tendency, in a sense, continues in the contemporary academic world.[34] However, our aim here is not to construct a theory of capital but to foreground the ways in which subalterns were exploited under the colonial market economy. Chalcraft suggests that there might have been multiple regimes of production and exploitation that have been shaped not only by the commodity forms but also by war-making, the state, empire building, political struggle, citizenship, capital/labour relations, unionisation, racism, gender, and so on.[35] In these respects, it may

30 Dipesh Chakrabarty, *Provincializing Europe. Postcolonial Thought and Historical Differences* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000), 18–19, 66; for a sharp critique of this work, see Chalcraft, 'Pluralizing Capital', 13–39.

31 Chakrabarty, *Provincializing Europe*, 67.

32 Chakrabarty, *Habitations of Modernity: Essays in the Wake of Subaltern Studies* (Delhi: Permanent Black, 2002), 20–37.

33 Chalcraft, 'Pluralizing Capital', 24.

34 Guha, *Dominance without Hegemony*, 19.

35 Chalcraft, 'Pluralizing Capital', 28.

be argued, provisionally, that multiple regimes of capital existed in colonial India, and that the Indian State — Hyderabad — that forms the subject of this book had a distinct capitalist mode of production which functioned under the paramountcy of colonial rule and in an ever-evolving relationship with it.

Once we begin to examine the underpinnings of colonial power, or what David Scott has called 'targets of colonial power' and the 'field of its operation,'[36] we have to interrogate the practices, modalities, and projects through which such power entered into the lives of the colonised at an everyday level. Scott, following Foucault, has argued that colonial regimes achieved a hegemonic effect through the inculcation of new forms of governance and 'technologies of the self.'[37] In this, he has built on Foucault's late writings on 'governmentality.' Foucault's concept of power/knowledge has been used by postcolonial scholars in their analysis of the connection between colonial knowledge and domination. From such a perspective, new forms of state power and surveillance that were developed in Europe in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries were imposed on the colonies, along with new systems of knowledge about 'oriental' peoples that profoundly influenced the interaction between colonisers and the colonised.[38] The idea of 'governmentality' offered a view on power beyond this sort of perspective that centred either on consensus or on violence. It linked technologies of the self with technologies of domination, the constitution of the subject to the formation of the state; finally, it helped to differentiate between power and domination.[39]

36 David Scott refers 'targets of colonial power' to the point or points of power's application; the object or objects it aims at; and the means and instrumentalities it deploys in search of these targets, points, and objects, and 'field of its operation' to the zone that it actively constructs for its functionality. See his *Refashioning Futures: Criticism after Postcoloniality* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1999), 25.

37 Ibid., 25–26.

38 Edward. W. Said, *Orientalism: Western Conceptions of the Orient* (London: Penguin, 1995); Ronald Inden, *Imagining India* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1992); also see Guha, *Domination without Hegemony*.

39 Thomas Lemke, 'Foucault, Governmentality and Critique' (unpublished paper presented at Rethinking Marxism Conference, University of Amherst (MA), 21–24 September 2000, 3.

Foucault used 'governmentality' mainly to analyse the connections between what he called technologies of the self and technologies of domination, the constitution of the subject and formation of the state. He says there are four major types of technologies—each a matrix of practical reason: technology of production, technology of sign (science and linguistics), technology of power, and technology of the self. These technologies hardly ever function separately, although each one of them is associated with a certain type of domination. Each implies certain modes of training and modification of individuals, not only in the obvious sense of acquiring certain skills but also in the sense of acquiring certain attitudes. The contact between the technologies of domination of others and those of the self he calls 'governmentality.'[40]

It is important to discuss to some extent what governmentality constitutes and the fundamental principles in its deployment. The problem of modern governance, Foucault said, first emerged from two consideration of the sixteenth century: one, the end of feudalism and the emergence of great empires, administrative and colonial states; and the second, the emergence of religious reforms and counter-reforms. From this crisis, a number of questions were raised—how to be ruled? how strictly? by whom? to what end? by what methods?—and so on. There was, he says, a problem of governance in general. From this crisis, the interpreter attempted to articulate a kind of rationality that was intrinsic to the art of government, without subordinating it to the conundrum of the prince and of his relationship to the principality of which he was lord and master. The art of government was, therefore, defined in a manner differentiating it from a certain capacity of the prince.[41] The growth of mercantilism and population in the eighteenth century changed modern governance fundamentally from being an art to a political science, and from a regime dominated by structures of sovereignty to one ruled by techniques of government (political rationality).[42] According to Foucault:

40 Michel Foucault, 'Technology of the Self', in *Technologies of the Self: A Seminar with Michel Foucault*, eds. Luther H. Martin, Huck Gutman, Patrick H. Hutton (Amherst: The University of Massachusetts Press, 1988), 18.

41 Foucault, 'Governmentality', 87–89.

42 Ibid., 101.

> Government is defined as a right manner of disposing things so as to lead not to the form of the common good, as the jurist texts would have said, but an end which is 'convenient' for each of the things that are to be governed...it is a question not of imposing law on men, but of disposing things; that is to say, of employing tactics rather than laws, and even of using laws themselves as tactics to arrange things in such a way that, through a certain number of means, such and such ends may be achieved.[43]...wisdom, understood no longer in the traditional sense as knowledge of divine and human laws, of justice and equality, but rather as the knowledge of things, of the objectives that can and should be attained, and the disposition of things required to reach them. It is this knowledge that is to constitute the wisdom of the sovereign.[44]...the state is governed according to rational principles which are intrinsic to it and which cannot be derived solely from natural or divine laws or the principles of wisdom and prudence; the state like nature, has its own proper form of rationality, albeit of a different sort.[45]

The process which began in the sixteenth century thus gradually replaced 'sovereignty' with 'government' by the end of the eighteenth century, which combines two seemingly contradictory modalities of power: one, totalising and centralising, the other individualising and normalising.[46] These technologies can be seen as being central also to the establishment of colonial domination. The colonised were forced, by either one or another technology of power, to change their material and spiritual culture, tradition, behaviour and attitude according to the tenets of such a capitalist rationality.

Following from this, a central aim of this book will be to examine the ways in which colonial political rationality and the market economy evolved and was organised in Hyderabad State in order to meet the overall ends of the paramount power, the colonial state. It will focus on the ways in which this process destroyed or reshaped long-established practices and livelihoods of subaltern communities, and how the latter responded to this entire governmental process.

An important theme in this respect will be that of the self-reform and articulation of the community identity of the Lambadas. We

43 Ibid., 95.
44 Ibid., 96.
45 Ibid., 97.
46 Ibid., 103.

shall use the term 'community' in the sense of *jati* (caste/tribe), simply for the convenience of a wider range of readers, and also partly to avoid derogatory terms like 'caste' and 'tribe', which were coined by colonial administrators. However, we shall be using the term *'adivasi'* to describe 'tribal communities' collectively.[47] The question of community is a particularly controversial one. As Ronald Inden has stated, for the coloniser caste was seen as a fundamental signifier of Indian society, being a part of the essence of Indian civilisation.[48] With this in mind, techniques were forged to acquire and produce a body of knowledge of such communities that could be used for their control and management. The colonial state's endeavour to group the innumerable communities into an overarching four-fold *varna* system, its obsession with racial theories and racial superiority, and the anthropometric practices that were deployed to satisfy their hunger to classify races tended to stigmatise the lower class communities.[49] These constructions were established through colonial gazetteers, administration reports and census reports that have retained their influence to this day.[50]

This process has been mapped out by Nicholas B. Dirks in his *Castes of Mind*. He has brought out the connection between colonial power, knowledge and history, narrating the career of caste from the pre-colonial to the colonial period, and beyond. He marks out 1857 as the crucial point of departure between Orientalist and Christian missionary scholarship and a later imperialist scholarship that relied on ethnography. Post-1857, a great body of knowledge was produced that helped the colonial state to rationalise, systematise and police the Indian tradition. In the process, it became what he calls an 'ethnographic state'. He argues that it both valorised and distorted the agency of caste, and that the effects of this are still

47 The term *adivasi* is a combination of *adi* (earliest) and *vasi* (resident) meaning original inhabitants. It could have originated in Chhotanagpur of Bihar in the 1930s, and it was widely popularised by a social worker, A. V. Thakkar, in the 1940s. For an elaborate discussion on this term, see David Hardiman, *The Coming of the Devi: Adivasi Assertion in Western India* (Delhi: Oxford University Press 1987), 13–17.
48 Inden, *Imagining India*, 49.
49 Ibid, 53–74.
50 Susan Bayly, *Caste, Society and Politics in India from the Eighteenth Century to the Modern Age* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 2.

being experienced in India. The process produced new forms of caste consciousness and identity. In short, Dirks argues, colonialism made caste what it is today.[51]

From the 1920s onwards, Indians with sociological and anthropological training began to put their distinctive stamp on the understanding of caste. Influenced often by Indian nationalism, they tended to emphasise the way in which the institution created social cohesion and conformity to the Hindu hierarchy.[52] A leading figure in this respect was the Saraswat Brahman, G. S. Ghurye. His most important works were *Caste and Race in India*, (1932), and *The Aborigines—So-called and their Future* (later re-titled as *The Scheduled Tribes of India*) published in 1944.[53] Most of his ideas and methodologies reflected colonial anthropology, and he differed from colonialists such as Risley only in his politics, which adopted a Hindu nationalist and Brahmanical agenda. He held that every inhabitant of the Indian subcontinent was Hindu by birth.[54] In *The Aborigines—So-called and their Future*, Ghurye argued that the *adivasis* of India were Hindus for the simple reason that they were born on Indian soil, worshipped Hindu gods, and spoke the same regional languages as caste-Hindus. He opposed the enumeration of adivasis in the census under the category of 'Animists'.[55] Although he used the term 'aboriginal' in this book, he later rejected it, as well as the term adivasi, as both implied that they were the original inhabitants of India who had been usurped by invaders. He argued that such terms encouraged the creation of communal blocs. In the second edition of the book, published in 1954, he changed the title to *The Scheduled Tribes of India*, and designated the adivasis as 'Backward Hindus'.[56] He claimed that the 'primitive tribal' people

51 Nicholas B. Dirks, *Castes of Mind: Colonialism and the Making of Modern India* (Delhi: Permanent Black, 2002), 5–18.

52 G. S. Ghurye, *The Scheduled Tribes of India*, repr. (New Brunswick: Transaction Books, 1980); M. N. Srinivas, *Social Change in Modern India*, repr. (New Delhi: Oriental Longman, 2001); D. Pocock, *Kanbi and Patidar: A study of the Patidar Community of Gujarat* (London: Oxford University Press, 1972).

53 Ghurye, *The Scheduled Tribes of India*, see introduction by Everett C. Hughes.

54 Dirks, *Castes of Mind*, 247.

55 Ghurye, *The Scheduled Tribes of India*, 7–12.

56 Ibid, 20.

had been gradually civilised by the Hindus, and that contact with Hindu society had benefited them in numerous ways.[57]

A similar bias can be discerned in the writings of another Brahman, the south Indian M. N. Srinivas, who trained at Oxford and emerged as a world-renowned social anthropologist in the postcolonial period. His theory of Sanskritisation has its origins in his observation of the Brahmanisation of Coorgs in south India. In *Religions and Society Among the Coorgs* (1952), he brought out the Brahmanisation process among them, and generalised it to the entire Indian subcontinent under the banner of Sanskritisation.[58] He argued that 'Sanskritisation is the process by which a 'low' Hindu caste, or tribal or other group, changes its customs, ritual ideology and way of life in the direction of a high, and frequently, 'twice-born' caste.'[59] Srinivas stated that the claim of the Bhil and Oraon *adivasis* to Kshatriya status revealed that they were inclined towards Sanskritisation.[60] In this, like Ghurye, he marked such subordinate communities as 'Hindus', and implied that they accepted the rules of the system. Srinivas's theory of Sanskritisation was thus dominated by a Hindu nationalist ideology that served to counter the anti-Brahmanical sentiments of the non-Brahman movement in south India.[61] Some sociological studies have also attempted to study social change in India through family institutions. D. Pocock shows from his study on the Kanbi and Patidar communities of western India that the hypergamous marriages among the latter helped them move upwards within the internal hierarchy of their caste.[62] In the works of Ghurye, Srinivas and Pocock, religious, caste and family institutions were seen as the main agents of social transformation among Indian castes/communities. The main problem with such scholarship was that it confined its analysis largely within the walls of social institutions and failed to underline how these institutions were re-modified and reshaped by larger economic and political forces, particularly during the colonial period. It was functionalist in

57 Ibid., 27–47.

58 Srinivas, *Social Change*, see preface by M. B. Emeneau.

59 Ibid., 6.

60 Ibid., 2.

61 Dirks, *Castes of Mind*, 254.

62 Pocock, *Kanbi and Patidar*, 4.

its approach and shared the constructions of a staunch structuralist like Louis Dumont, who argued that caste divided Indian society vertically and horizontally and kept India static, unchanged, and even undeveloped.[63] Such themes are still influential in modern Indian sociology and anthropology. From such a viewpoint, adivasi/subaltern communities are seen to be 'static,' 'unchanging,' 'cold' or 'little' societies, and they are studied in ways that in some cases romanticise their condition, or in others denigrate them as 'primitive.'[64]

Subaltern Studies see caste/community in different terms, as a force for radical anti-colonial mobilisation and organisation that operated according to its own rationality, which was anti-capitalist, and which had a potential to turn into a future socialist society in a way that bypassed capitalism. The inauguration of the subaltern project marked an epoch in the study of histories with its sharp departure from a Marxist historiography that valorised secular and class-based movements over and above religious or caste-based movements, which were seen to be riddled with 'false consciousness.' Subaltern Studies, which were influenced strongly by the cultural and sociological theories of Gramsci, Foucault and Derrida, abandoned such a viewpoint. Instead, they stressed the autonomy of insurgency and highlighted the agency of the subaltern.[65]

Shail Mayaram, Ajay Skaria and David Hardiman, who are closely associated with Subaltern Studies, have provided histories of communities from such a perspective. Mayaram's *Against History, Against State*, taking a sharp departure from conventional historiography, shows how the Meo community of northwest India articulated its own history through an ongoing struggle against succeeding regimes. In the process, the Meos asserted an alternative identity and history for themselves through their oral literature in a way that offers significant insights into their lives. Their articulations

63 Louis Dumont, *Homo Hierarchicus: The Caste System and its Implication*, trans. Mark Sainsbury (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1970), 39.

64 Yogendra Singh has summed up all these theories of social change in India. See his *Modernisation of Indian Tradition*, repr. (Jaipur: Rawat, 2001), 1–27.

65 David Ludden, ed. *Reading Subaltern studies: Critical History, Contested Meaning and the Globalization of South Asia* (London: Anthem, 2002), see introduction, 1–26.

of multiple politics, multiple histories and multiple identities stood opposed to the authoritarian state, which sought to subjugate such diversity within an overarching and unified polity.[66] Mayaram argues that community identity is created by a combination of the self-articulation of the community and the rationalisation of state power. The memorialised past permits individual memory and shapes both self and society. Solidarity is constituted through the memory of conquest and conflict, friendship and alliance, heroism and tragedy. On the other hand, the community is produced by the intellectual system of ruling groups that are inextricably linked to the institutional practices of governing. The sovereign must construct the Other in order for it to be controlled and domesticated which is the very condition of the social contract and the act of subordination. The exploration of domination and the exercise of power requires an investigation into the processes of knowledge that continuously structures the social world.[67]

In *Hybrid Histories*, Ajay Skaria provides another novel experiment in historical methodology. He examines the stories of the *Dangis*, people of the Dangs, a densely-forested mountain tract of Western India. These stories contrast the *'Moglai'* (pre-British) with the *'Mandini'* (British) periods. Moglai is the time of freedom—to move in the forests, to raid, to collect dues called *giras* from the plains—and to have a distinctive pattern of political authority. In Mandini, by contrast, Dangis lost their power to the British, so that they could no longer move about as they did formerly, or raid the surrounding plains.[68] Skaria shows how these categorisations do not tally with the periodisations applied by historians as both periods constitute a history of modernity. He says that notions of the *jangal* (forest) and *jangli* ('wild' people) were taken to be the antithesis of civilisation by the colonial as well as post-colonial rulers. For Dangis, they had strongly positive connotations, being crucial to the construction of power, authority and identity in their society. In their *gots* (oral accounts) the jangal and jangli became a counter-aesthetic of modernity and very much part of their civilization. This

66 Mayaram, *Against History, Against State*, 1–18.

67 Ibid., p. 228.

68 Ajay Skaria, *Hybrid Histories: Forest, Frontiers and Wildness in Western India* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1999), 15.

politics also had a profound influence on the surrounding plains society, therefore on the hegemony of the discourse of wildness.[69] Skaria's study elucidates how the agency of the community and oral history are crucial in the articulation and mobilisation of the Dangis against the colonial encounters over their politics and lives.[70]

In a similar vein, David Hardiman has brought out, in his *The Coming of the Devi*, that the popular culture was instrumental in the articulation of the adivasi community of western India in both forging an adivasi modernity as well as in countering and combating the burden of colonial modernity. The *devi* (goddess) culture of the adivasis in which the devi entered into the body of the adivasis and expressed her demands through the mouths of the spirit-mediums not only moved the adivasis towards self-reform and modernity, but also helped them to fight against the exploitative Parsi liquor sellers, moneylenders and landlords, as well as the colonial forest officials. The common demands of the devi were:

> Stop drinking liquor and toddy,
> Stop eating meat and fish,
> Live a clean and simple life,
> Men should take bath twice a day,
> Women should take bath thrice a day,
> Have nothing to do with Parsis.

Through the commands of the devi, the adivasis were able to mobilise themselves to resist their oppressors. This movement spread widely across the adivasi region of Western India and had a profound impact on sale of liquor that was taxed by the British and local princely rulers. He argues that conventional socialist scholarship had tended to depict such movements as being informed by superstitious belief, witchcraft and a form of primeval consciousness.[71] He argues, by contrast, that everyday life experience, which involves mutual cooperation and shared spiritual culture, are crucial in articulation of the community identity. He states that the adivasis of Western India were scattered in the highlands, but a thread of communal unity stretched through each community in

69 Ibid., preface, viii–ix.

70 Ibid., 293.

71 Hardiman, *The Coming of the Devi*, 1–9.

its dialect, the way they dressed—both in the colours and patterns of their clothes and the distinct way they tied their garments, such as turban and saris and in their community gods and goddess. This was reinforced by pilgrimages to various shrines, where adivasis from surrounding areas congregated, and by their firm refusal to allow their beliefs and practices to be unduly influenced by those of the non-adivasis, and by their insurgence against the exploitative Parsi (moneylender and liquor-seller). The strength in Hardiman's argument lies in the way he delineates how the adversity experienced by the adivasis provided the grounds for a distinct form of resistance against colonial exploitation.[72]

These three studies of the subaltern communities, unlike the structuralists' studies, suggest an alternative history and historiography of community identity. The connecting theme in these studies is that everyday experiences and politics of the community are crucial to its articulation of identity. They suggest also that community identity is fashioned by the effect of state power. Although these studies, except for Mayaram's, deal with community articulations of shared groups of related communities rather than a single community, they provide a new methodological tool for the study of subaltern groups. We find this methodology useful also for the subject of this book—the Lambada community of Hyderabad State. In particular, it is useful in examining the ways in which the Lambada community articulated and rearticulated its identity in the context of the colonial establishment, and how the Lambadas interacted with the colonial-cum-state establishment by deploying their spiritual culture.

The genealogy of the Lambadas' spiritual culture and cultural articulations can be better understood through their oral narratives. The Lambada community has a strong oral tradition. This tradition has been passed on from generation to generation in the form of *sakies* (stories), *shaval* (proverbs), and *geeths* (songs). We use these shared memories and traditions to define their history, and, in the process, downplay the colonial stereotypes as well as anticipate, with secularity and rationality, the dominant history of the contemporary world. Indeed oral history is a tool that not only provides the historian with a means to overcome the deficiency of material but

72 Ibid., 78–85.

also offers important insights into the lived history. Particularly in countries like India, where a large number of communities were denied both literacy and textual history, oral histories are a primary source to explore to construct their social history. Alessandro Portelli says that oral sources are a necessary condition for a history of the non-hegemonic classes; they are less necessary for the history of the ruling classes who have had control over writing and leave behind much more abundant written records.[73] The Lambadas, as a subaltern group in Indian history, lack such written records; therefore, oral sources provide an important means to understand and construct their history and thought.

Oral histories have, thanks to subaltern and ethno-history projects, achieved a considerable momentum in recent historical writings. Previously, mainstream historians often saw them as inauthentic sources, being mere 'myth' or 'folklore.' Such an attitude effectively marginalized the history of the subaltern communities, and by implication their systems of knowledge, their political organisation, their perspectives, their experience and even their language. It is precisely because conventional history recognised only the powerful and the victorious that history was largely a representation of their concerns.[74] The deficiency of such historical writing was pointed out by both ethno-historians and Subaltern Studies. From the 1960s, the ethno-historians of Chicago, the foremost figure of whom was Bernard S. Cohn, fused historical and anthropological approaches in constructing histories of non-literate societies. Underlining the fact that insufficient material was available to construct the histories of the lower castes and adivasis, they inaugurated a new methodology in which *kulavamsavalies* (family histories) or folklores could be used to construct the history of these groups.[75] One of Cohn's

73 Alessandro Portelli, *The Death of Luigi Trastulli and Other Stories: Form and Meaning in Oral History* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1991), 56; Portelli has revolutionised the use of oral sources in historical writings. His projects on the urban working class of Europe and America started from the early 1970s and were published in two volumes. The above-mentioned book is the first volume and the second one is *The Battle of Valle Giulia: Oral History and the Art of Dialogue* (Wisconsin: University of Wisconsin Press, 1997).

74 Mayaram, *Against History*, 2.

75 Bernard S. Cohn, *An Anthropologist Among the Historians and Other Essays* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1987), see introduction by Ranajit Guha.

students was Nicholas Dirks, whose construction of the history of the Palaiyakaras of south India was a novel experiment, where, using *kulavamsavalies*, he shows their dramatic transformation in history. This study showed that these histories were more than mere 'myth,' and it used them to provide important clues towards an understanding of indigenous society and history.[76]

In a similar vein, subaltern historians have shown how oral histories can provide an alternative understanding to the written sources that allow us both to reinterpret archival records as well as produce a more engaged history in which a sympathetic rapport is achieved with the subaltern's struggle, both in the past and in the present.[77] The works of Mayaram, Skaria and Hardiman, in particular, provide classic examples of this sort. It is interesting to look at Hardiman's hunt for the devi in Western India, and how he could ultimately recreate the goddess from the oral memory of the adivasis, something that was not possible using the archival sources alone. The movement had remained a part of their memory, with stories being passed on from generation to generation. The adivasis could answer many of Hardiman's questions, such as: why did the adivasis inaugurate the movement? Where did it start? Why did it occur in the colonial period and not earlier? He has, after relating the oral accounts, deployed the archival sources to show how colonial taxes on liquor and land and new forest laws created the conditions for a movement that enjoined abstinence from liquor. In its later phase, this movement was able to link up with Gandhi's larger anti-colonial struggle.[78] Mayaram says 'memory bridges myth and history, helps us explore different forms of the historical imagination in the past, and may be useful in furthering the vision of an alternative history.'[79] Shahid Amin, in his *Event, Metaphor and Memory*, has brought out how the Chauri Chaura incident of 1922 left a different imprint in the minds of the subaltern communities

76 Nicholas B. Dirks, 'The Pasts of Palaiyakara: The Ethnohistory of a South Indian Little King', *Journal of Asian Studies* 41, no.4, 1982, 656; also see his *The Hollow Crown: Ethnohistory of an Indian Kingdom* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987).

77 David Hardiman, 'Community Patriarchy Honour: Raghu Bhangre's Revolt', *The Journal of Peasant Studies* 23, no. 1, 1995, 99.

78 Hardiman, *The Coming of the Devi*, 19–21.

79 Mayaram, *Against History*, 235.

vis-à-vis the mainstream. Amin shows, using oral stories, how the personal experiences of various people led them to understand the incident in very different ways. He argues also that the Gandhian nationalists shared the colonial state's view on the incident that the incident was a 'criminal' outburst, because of its violence.[80]

Nevertheless, a degree of scepticism about oral sources is still felt in academia. Although it is generally now accepted that history writing is a subjective rather than objective exercise, a dichotomy is still seen to exist between history and 'myth.' This is seen to coincide with the difference between the so called civilised and uncivilised worlds, or hot and cold societies, so that hot societies experienced change and possess a sense of history, while cold societies are seen to be relatively unchanging and ruled by a sense of 'myth'.[81] The modern notion of 'myth,' which dates back to the European enlightenment, is constructed as a counterpoint to 'rational' knowledge and discourse.[82] This understanding was shared in India by imperialists, liberals, nationalists, socialists and Marxists alike. In recent years, the critique of 'myth' has been further fuelled in India by the emergence of the Hindu Right, which manipulates certain myths in a way that justifies its violence against minority communities. The myth of Ram's birthplace was thus used to validate the violent and illegal destruction of the Babri mosque in Ayodhya.[83] The resulting secular-rationalist distrust of the use of myth has fed into a critique of Subaltern Studies, which is seen to celebrate the mythical in highly problematic ways. It is objected that such a methodology not only enables the Hindu Right to claim the legitimacy of its 'myth' constructed with fascist intentions, but it also disturbs secularists' totalising and universalising the knowledge system that they have constructed all through the years on the foundation of rationality.[84]

80 Shahid Amin, *Event Metaphor Memory: Chaury Chaura, 1922–1992* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995).

81 Skaria, *Hybrid Histories*, 4.

82 Mayaram, *Against History*, 234.

83 S. Gopal, *Anatomy of a Confrontation: The Babri Masjid–Ram Janmabhumi Issue* (New Delhi: 1991).

84 Chakrabarty, *Habitations of Modernity*, 21–29.

In fact, 'myth' has many manifestations, both oppressive and liberating. We can avoid the 'danger of fascism' not so much by distancing ourselves from myth, but rather by engaging with it in a critical manner. Myths are Janus-faced. While they may form a basis for subaltern consciousness and its self-assertion against domination, and they may help us to understand subaltern consciousness, they may also be deployed by the dominant set to manipulate and control subaltern groups. Because of this, myths provide a ground for conflict, with the dominant and the subordinate each vying to impose its own meaning. Despite this, there is a tendency for the myths that are deployed by the dominant classes to be unitary and standardised, especially when they are written down, while the oral myths of the subaltern are multiple, plural and oppositional.[85] As Foucault suggests: 'a genealogy should be seen as a kind of attempt to emancipate historical knowledge from the subjection, to render them, that is capable of opposition and of struggle against the coercion of a theoretical, unitary, formal and scientific discourse.'[86] We use oral histories in this vein to construct the history of the subaltern groups as well as to question the written historical sources. Saying this, we do not reject rationality, history, modernity and power as such; rather we aim to bring out multiple rationalities, multiple histories, multiple modernities and multiple insurgencies against power, so that written, archive-based history, rather than being rejected, is made to share a place with the oral account. These themes are the main concerns of this book.

The book will be divided into five chapters, besides an introduction and a conclusion. The focus will be on the effects of colonial political rationality on the Lambada community, and its sense of self-identity, as reflected in the historical texts and the oral culture of the community.

It will begin by focusing on the history of the Lambadas as caravan traders and transporters involved in long-distance trade and transportation. The book will analyse the ways in which the Lambadas evolved, drawing its membership from a variety of

85 For further discussion on this point, see Skaria, *Hybrid Histories*, 1–18; also see Mayaram, *Against History*, 227–42.

86 Michel Foucault, *Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews and Other Writings 1972–1977*, ed. Colin Gordon (London: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1980), 85.

disparate social and religious groups engaged in such occupations. The Lambadas were known as prominent transporters as far back as the time of the Delhi Sultans, and they accompanied the Sultanate, Mughal, Nizam and East India Company armies as food grain carriers. The structural hierarchy of the mercantile community would appear to be of great significance in comprehending the dynamics of Lambada identity. The intervention of colonial rule was detrimental to the caravan trade. The emergence of the new market economy, new market regulations and the growth of modern transport and communication were crucial in this respect. On the other hand, their low position in the trade hierarchy denied them institutional support and access to credit, which led to their exploitation by usurers of higher social status and contributed to the precarious nature of their life. The corporatisation of bigger companies drove out smaller communities from their petty trades and transformed them into hired labourers. With the consolidation of colonial rule, the inauguration of a new market economy gradually reduced the freewheeling Lambada traders to the position of hired labour. We shall discuss this process of subalternisation of the Lambadas in chapter 1.

Chapter 2 will examine the Lambadas' role as cattle raisers and cattle traders during the colonial period. Their occupation required that they had access to grazing land. Under colonial rule, large areas of grazing land were designated as forest tracts that were reserved for use of the state. Cattle grazers were either excluded or were required to pay a grazing tax. They were thus dispossessed of a crucial community resource. The political rationalisation in the state (regulations of cattle trespass, forest, fodder, cattle breeding and health, market, customs, etc.,) from the middle of the nineteenth century eventually went against the interests of cattle breeders. The colonial state was always suspicious of nomadic people and used a number of devices to check them. All of this created pressures on them to abandon their nomadic life and settle down as agriculturists. In the process, as they adapted to the new life, their culture and belief systems evolved and changed.

During this period, the Lambadas became known for their supposed 'criminality'. They gained such a reputation, in a large part, as a consequence of the loss of their customary resources under the colonial forest laws and recurrent famine, leading to

the criminalisation of many activities that they had engaged in as a matter of right in earlier times (e.g. grazing of cattle in forests). Their economic marginalisation, coupled with famines, led to food grain raids. The state ignored the economic and social roots of such 'criminality', and built a body of knowledge that designated such communities as 'criminal castes and tribes'. From such a viewpoint, 'criminality' was culturally and even genetically reproduced. Anthropometric studies were carried out designed to reveal the peculiar physical characteristics of 'criminal' communities. The Lambadas were one of the communities so stigmatised. Although only a small minority of the Lambadas were involved in criminal activities, the community as a whole was branded in this manner and was subject to the wrath of the Nizam police. The police recruited local elites to monitor the Lambadas. During the early twentieth century, whole groups were relocated into settlements of 'criminal tribes', where they were subject to a continuing surveillance and discipline through morning and evening roll calls. In this way, the Lambadas were crushed into submission. Thereafter, many had no choice but to serve the rural elites as bonded labourers. We shall deal with this aspect in chapter 3, while showing how the treatment of criminal tribes converged with the larger agenda of the modern state to create a surveillance society.

We shall then, in chapter 4, look at the process of settlement and peasantisation of the Lambadas, and their subjugation to landlords as agricultural labourers. From the middle of the nineteenth century, the Lambadas gradually renounced their nomadic life and started settling down on *banjar* land, which was, in part, wasteland in the vicinity of the villages of the plains regions and in the forest tracts in Hyderabad State. In the process, they became small-scale cultivators, bringing village wastelands and forest land into cultivation. The British introduced 'rule of property' in land, which insured new forms of land relations. This, clubbed with the colonial agricultural policies and market economy, created a great demand for land that resulted in the Lambadas losing their plots to the land-hungry dominant communities through heinous money-lending practices and by force. In time, the state came to view their extension of agriculture as a serious threat to its forest conservation agenda, and pushed back the foraging Lambadas from the forest tracts by ruthless harassment and ejection. The zamindars, for their

part, claimed rights over village wastelands, and started extracting taxes from the Lambadas. These two processes operated to prevent the Lambadas from establishing themselves as viable independent peasant farmers, and it left them at the mercy of the zamindars and usurers. This was also a period of recurrent famine, further subjugating them to these superior providers. In the past, they might have migrated out of the famine region, but this option was now closed to them by the action of the state. In most cases, they were forced into the ranks of the agrarian proletariat, as labourers who were characteristically bound to the landowning classes through debt. The Lambadas waged a serious insurgency against eviction and exploitation, which was later transformed into the Telangana armed struggle at the end of the Nizam's rule.

Chapter 5 will examine the ways in which these processes acted on the cultural life of the Lambadas. Their social and religious culture was rooted firmly in their material culture. They shared some elements of their religious culture with the Hindu, Sikh and Muslim society. This became more apparent from the nineteenth century, when there was greater interaction between the Lambadas and the mainstream, as they were dislodged from their nomadic lifestyle and began settling down as peasant subjects. At the same time, the political rationality deployed by the colonial establishment pushed them towards self-reform. In response to these developments, religious leaders emerged from within the community and preached non-violent and vegetarian values in order to alter their militant culture. This helped them to not only assert their culture but also to face the challenges posed by the colonial establishment. This form of cultural assertion was gradually converted into community identity politics by the educated Lambadas from the early decades of twentieth century. The educated Lambada leaders also sought to reform the community besides mobilising it around economic and political causes. Their ambition was for Lambadas to occupy a higher position within the caste-Hindu society, often as Rajputs (Kshatriya varna), through articulating and rearticulating their oral narratives. The ethnographic and census politics of the colonial state also encouraged the Lambadas to advance such a claim. In this way, the Lambadas articulated a new consciousness and identity and emerged as a distinct social and political entity within the postcolonial polity.

1

The Twilight World of the Caravan

The Regulated Market Economy and the Caravanners

Before the advent of the modern market and transport system in India, the Lambadas were known as major caravan traders and merchants. The caravan trade dates back to ancient times. From the eleventh century, as trade and commerce expanded, it began to flourish, peaking during the Mughal period, as the imperial army maintained and employed huge numbers of nomadic groups as baggage carriers and food grain transporters.[1] Several nomadic and pastoral communities were involved in this trade, the Lambadas being a principal one among them, particularly in South India. Their caravan trade networks were highly organised and played a crucial role in the growth of large-scale long-distance trade from the sixteenth century. Their role was particularly important during famines, as food grain was supplied from surplus to deficit areas through their caravan network. In addition, they also served as commissariat food grain and baggage transporters to armies during wars. They served the Sultanate, Mughal, French, British, and Nizam armies as independent transporters. They also acted as carriers for other merchants and dealers, and were often merchants in their own right as well, a fact that suggests that at least some had accumulated

1 Bayly, *Rulers, Townsmen*, 28–29.

capital.[2] However, with the emergence of the regulated market and new economic relations enforced by the colonial rulers, the caravan traders were marginalised.[3] This, coupled with the introduction of the railways and the growth of infrastructure, ruined the Lambadas' caravan trade. In fact the Lambadas suffered harsh treatment at the hands of the colonial state. Their caravans had been used by the colonial powers when the latter were first establishing themselves and expanding their markets. Once they stabilised their position, the Lambadas fell out of favour. Now, their nomadic ways appeared to inhibit the formation of the new market economy and the modern state.[4]

The colonial state did not view the long-established trade and market practices of groups such as the Lambadas positively, considering them to be backward and irrational.[5] Fairs and *jataras* (pilgrimages), at which communities converged for trade and transaction, were discouraged and suppressed by the colonial state through new regulations and customs and transit duties. These practices inhibited the local market and exchange relations. The colonial state, indeed, appropriated and refashioned long-established market places by erecting regulated markets in towns and urban centres or fixed market places.[6]

In this chapter, we seek to examine how the colonial regulation of the market economy combined with the introduction of railways and the growth of roads ruined the Lambadas' caravan trade in Hyderabad State. This study is not meant to examine the economic history of the region, but it primarily focuses on the social history of the evolution and decline of the Lambadas' caravan trade. The

2 Balfour, *On the Ethnology*, 12–13.

3 Asiya Siddiqi, ed., *Trade and Finance in Colonial India, 1750–1860* (Delhi: Oxford University Press 1995), introduction, 43.

4 NAI, HRR, vol. 568, part. II, 1782–1888, 378.

5 K. N. Chaudhuri, *Trade and Civilisation in the Indian Ocean: An Economic History from the Rise of Islam to 1750* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), 222.

6 Sudipta Sen has brought out how the colonial establishment considered traditional fairs and jataras in Bengal as obstacles to its business and destroyed them ruthlessly through various regulations. See his *Empire of Free Trade: The East India Company and Making of the Colonial Market Places* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1998), 1–18.

following questions will be dealt with. How did the nomadic lives of the Lambadas drive them towards the caravan trade? How was the Lambada community formed from the various subaltern communities? How did the Lambadas' history of subalternity relate with the larger agenda of the colonial state? How did the colonial state suppress the local long-standing market practices and relations? How did the colonial establishment create dominant market forces to meet its ends? And how did these forces scuttle the Lambadas' trading opportunities? While addressing these questions, I aim to also delineate the role played by the Lambadas in transporting food grains during times of distress, and in establishing a food grain market network in rural Hyderabad. These questions help us situate the Lambadas' history within the colonial market economy. Additionally, this chapter seeks to understand the various other problems encountered by the Lambadas in the face of colonial rule, which will lead into the detailed discussion of these issues in later chapters. In this sense, this chapter becomes the core around which the other chapters are woven.

Before we take up the questions mentioned above it would be helpful to look at the history of the origins of the Lambadas. Particularly, we need to try to understand how the Lambada community was involved historically with the caravan trade; how the colonial ethnography and state endeavoured to create a homogeneous community of caravan traders; and how the Lambadas came to South India in search of a livelihood.

A BRIEF HISTORY OF LAMBADA CARAVANNERS

The history of the Lambadas begins with the caravan trade. Communities of nomadic caravanners were found all over the subcontinent, each with its own distinctive historical, cultural and social background. They appear to have been loose groupings, assimilating members from others involved in such a trade or even from settled peoples. Being a flourishing trade, there were attractions in taking up such an occupation. In the course of time, each group developed a varied social and racial composition and past. The communities of nomadic caravanners have different names and social roots in every region, and they claim a variety of statuses

within the Hindu caste-society.[7] Their complex pasts and the scanty record of their early history make it difficult to understand the social history of these groups.

It is only from the sixteenth century that we find fairly detailed descriptions of them in the accounts and diaries of European travellers, and later on in the notes of colonial ethnographers and anthropologists. These groups especially attracted the attention of travellers and colonial ethnographers, because they traversed the country as grain suppliers to the army and came to be categorised as a 'criminal community'. However, these accounts and studies offer a fragmented and distorted view of the groups' histories. The colonial state had commissioned a number of studies on all the caravan groups in order to club them into one homogeneous community. These studies classified many diverse groups under the *'Banjara'* community, which included the Lambadas. Although it is unclear as to what the classification criteria employed were, primarily the following three were used: (i) those who had a Rajasthani ancestry and whose language was akin to Marwari; (ii) those whose means of livelihood were in some ways connected with oxen; and finally, (iii) , those who were involved in the transport of grains and other items.[8]

There was a debate about the origin of the term 'Banjara' among nineteenth century ethnographers. One group argued that the term was derived from the Persian *Biranjar* or rice-carriers, while another believed that its origin could be traced to Sanskrit words like *vanjari van* (forest) and *char* (to wander)—meaning forest wanderers, and was eventually spelt as Banjara.[9] H. M. Elliot, a leading nineteenth century ethnographer, who standardised the term 'Banjara', had a different viewpoint. Dismissing the earlier arguments, Elliot felt that the term originated from the story of Pramati in the *Das Kumara Cheritra*, a play written by Dandi, a predecessor of Kalidasa

7 R. E. Enthoven, ed., *The Tribes and Castes of Bombay*, 2 vols., (Bombay: The Government Central Press, 1920), II: 331–35.

8 Robert Gabriel Varady, 'North Indian Banjaras: Their Evolution as Transporters', *South Asia* 2, no. 1–2, 1979, 2.

9 Enthoven, *The Tribes and Castes*, II: 331.

in the fifth century.[10] In the play, Pramati mentions a cockfight in the Banjara camp, and he suggests that the term was derived from the Sanskrit *Vanijya* or *Banijya-kara*, a merchant. Elliot sought to prove his point using Mageshtanish's *Indica xi* (fourth century BC), in which Banjaras were an ascribed social class; thereby arguing that the term is of Indian origin.[11] It is apparent that Elliot's constructions were drawn from Orientalist racial theories, which argued that non-Aryan language speakers were the oldest races of the sub-continent.[12] William Crooke carried out a similar exercise at the end of the nineteenth century and he agreed with Elliot.[13] However, we have no significant evidence that suggests a relation between the ancient Banjaras and the modern Lambadas. Nevertheless, this term was standardised to describe all caravan communities, and it was added to the *Supplement to the Glossary of Indian Terms* compiled by H. M. Elliot in 1842.[14]

Let us now examine the following: when did the communities of nomadic caravanners first appear in the historical accounts? What are the terms used by medieval chroniclers and early European travellers to describe the nomadic caravanners? How were those terms replaced with the modern term 'Banjara', when their accounts were translated into English or edited by nineteenth and

10 There is uncertainty about Dandi's period, but it is generally considered that he belonged to the eleventh or twelfth century.

11 H. M. Elliot, *Memories of the History, Folk-lore and Distribution of the Races of the North Western Provinces of India*, ed. John Beames (London: Trubner and Co., 1869), I: 53–54.

12 A similar exercise had also been done by George Abraham Grierson. He identified nomadic communities' (gypsies') languages with that of the Bhili, one of the oldest languages spoken in the Khandesh region of western India, because, according to him, the Banjaras belonged to the oldest race—that is, Dravidian. See his *Linguistic Survey of India: Gipsy Languages* (Calcutta: Superintendent of Government Printing, 1922), XI: 10–11; Susan Bayly, 'Caste and Race in the Colonial Ethnography of India', in *The Concept of Race in South Asia*, ed. Peter Robb (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1995), 172.

13 William Crooke, ed., *The Tribes and Castes of the North Western Provinces and Oudh*, 4 vols. (Calcutta: Superintendent of Government Printing, 1896), I: 149–150.

14 Varady, 'North Indian Banjaras', 12.

twentieth century ethnographers? These questions would help us to understand the mentality of the colonial anthropologist.

Historically, Zia Barani's account of Ala-ud-Din Khilji's (c.1296–1316) market-price control measures provides the first description of such a community, using the term 'Karwanis' (caravans) to describe them.[15] A later account by Shaikh Nasiruddin (c.1355) describes such people as *nayaks*.[16] The term Banjara first appears in Kabir's allegorical verse (c.1500) as well as in Guru Nanak's.[17] Badauni, who came to Akbar's court in 1574, used the term Banjaras, meaning grain-sellers, and he illustrated their importance in this capacity by giving examples, especially during the Mughal invasion of Mewar and Bengal.[18] Thomas Roe, East India Company's ambassador to India from 1615–19, has also described them at length, using the term 'caravan people'.[19] However, the term 'Banjara' became popular by the beginning of the nineteenth century and it was reproduced in all medieval accounts translated into English to designate caravan traders. For instance, Mahomed Kasim Perishta, a Persian historian, who came to Bijapur in 1589, described them as Hindoo Bunjaras.[20] It was John Briggs, who edited and reprinted Perishta's account in 1829, who modified this term as Banjara. A similar modification is also found in all edited volumes of European travellers' accounts. We find a long and interesting description of caravan people's lives and manners from Tavernier, a seventeenth century French traveller. He describes them as Manaris and classifies them into four groups based on the goods they traded. According to his classification the first group traded in corn, the second in rice, the third in pulses, and the fourth in salt. In addition to trading, each group owned

15 Zia Barani, *Tarikh-i-Firuz Shahi*, ed. Saiyed Ahmad Khan (Calcutta: Bibliotheca Indica, 1862), 305–7.

16 Cited in Habib, 'Merchant Communities', 374; chiefs or head men of Banjara groups were called 'Nayaks'.

17 Ibid., 374.

18 Al Badaoni, *Muntakhabu-t-Tawarikh*, trans. and ed. George S. A. Ranking, 3 vols. (Delhi: Renaissance Publishing House, 1986), I: 477; II: 182, 240.

19 *The Embassy of Sir Thomas Roe to India, 1615–19*, ed. William Foster (London: Oxford University Press, 1926), 313.

20 M. K. Ferishta, *History of the Rise of the Mahomedan power in India till the Year 1612*, trans. John Briggs, 3 vols. repr. (New Delhi; Oriental Booksreprint Corporation, 1981), II: 243.

about one hundred thousand herds. But William Crooke, editor of *Travels in India*, supposes that Manaris was probably a corruption of the term 'Banjaras', and merges the four groups into one big community, dismissing the divergent cultural traits of the four.[21] The colonial ethnography/anthropology thus clubbed all the caravan bodies into one social group.

The grouping of these divergent communities into one grand social stock or homogeneous community was, indeed, tempered by the colonial project of knowledge creation as well as by the European racial theories of the nineteenth century. The colonial state collected social and demographic data of the colony for multiple usages. It conceived its anthropological knowledge of the colony as the principal device to understand and control its subjects and to legitimise its hegemony.[22] The colonial state sought to implement this project of knowledge creation more rigorously from the middle of the nineteenth century. It was mainly because of the racial characterisation of the 1857 revolt that seriously challenged the British power in India, as well as the emergence of a more aggressive racial theory in western Europe. In this shift, every caste began to be defined in terms of race. This eventually resulted in opening up interesting discourses on caste and the caste system as a whole, and eventually occupation emerged as one of the main criteria in defining caste. From these discourses, two main schools of thought emerged: one led by Risley, which compared caste with race; and the other by Ibbetson, which endeavoured to see caste as the fundamental organ of the Indian social system.[23] In the identification of the races of India, indeed, the subaltern communities received greater attention, as the racial theorist believed that these were the oldest races and still carried past vestiges. One could see these trends operating when it came to the body of literature on the physical features and social practices of nomadic caravanners.[24]

21 Jean Baptiste Tavernier, *Travels in India*, ed. William, Crooke (London: Oxford University Press, 1925), I: 34.

22 Dirks, *Castes of Mind*, 44.

23 Ibbetson argued that tribal groups based on descent had become amalgamated into large tribal groups that were organised around occupations and specific functional affiliation. See Susan Bayly, 'Caste and Race', 165–218.

24 John Briggs, 'Account of the Origin, History, and Manners of the Race of Men Called Bunjaras', in *Transaction of the Literary Society of Bombay*, vol. I. (London,

Nevertheless, what we can grasp from the European travellers' account and colonial anthropology concerning communities of nomadic caravanners is that there were several social groups or communities engaged in the caravan trade, and many of them had distinct cultural and historical backgrounds. These texts also suggest that each group, in the beginning, traded in particular food grains, as is evident from Tavernier's accounts. In the course of time, they not only expanded their trade activities to other food grain items, but also expanded their social base, assimilating many other groups or individuals from various other subaltern castes. It is very much evident in the case of the communities of the nomadic caravanners of south India. They still maintain and assert their groups' early names and culture. For instance, in Hyderabad State they were popularly called Lambadas *or Lamanis.* It is presumed that the term 'Lambada' was derived from the Sanskrit *lavanah* or salt, as they were engaged in salt transportation and trade. Similarly, in Madras Presidency, they were called both Lambadas and *Sugali*, a term that may be a corruption of the Hindi *supari*, or betel nut, because they were involved in the betel nut trade.[25] The *Mukri Banjaras* of central India were associated with the maize or corn trade, suggesting that the term *Mukri* may have been derived from the Hindi *makka* or maize.[26] The *Mathuri Banjaras* of Bombay and the southern part of the United Central Provinces took their name from Mathura, as it was presumed that they originated from there.[27] Similarly, all Mahomedan caravanners are said to have come from Multan, and

1819), 170–197; also see his 'Origin, History and Manners of the Race of men called Bunjaras', *The Quarterly Oriental Magazine Review and Register*, vol. I, March–June 1824, 228–31; Edgar Thurston, and K. R. Chary, eds. *Castes and Tribes of Southern India*, 7 vols., repr. (New Delhi: Asian Educational Service, 1987), IV: 207–236; S. S. ul Hassan, ed., *The Castes and Tribes of H. E. H. the Nizam's Dominion* (Bombay: The Times Press, 1920), 15–27; L. K. A. Iyer and M. V. Nanjundayya, ed., *The Mysore Tribes and Castes*, 2 vols. (Mysore: Mysore University, 1928), II: 135–194; R. V. Russell and R. B. Hiralal, eds., *The Tribes and Castes of the Central Provinces of India*, 4 vols. (London: Macmillan, 1916), II: 62–193; Enthoven, *The Tribes and Castes*, II: 331–43.

25 Thurston, *Castes and Tribes*, IV: 207.

26 Crooke, *The Tribes and Castes*, I: 160.

27 Russell, *The Tribes and Castes*, II: 171.

are called *Multani Banjaras*.[28] A group of caravanners in central India are called *Hatadiya* or bullock, as they worshipped the bullock in the past.[29]

The term 'Lambadas', which was associated with the caravanners of Hyderabad State, probably first appears in the accounts of Francis Buchanan, who toured south India extensively at the end of the eighteenth century. Buchanan has described them extensively in his myriad accounts while describing their plundering of villages when in the service of the British army.[30] During the same period, John Malcolm, in his reminiscences of central India, calls them *Bringaries* and *Lombanas* and uses the terms interchangeably.[31] It is not to suggest that the Lambadas' existence as caravanners began from the eighteenth century, but the term appears in the texts of this period. They appear to be identical to the caravanners of fifteenth century South India.[32] Also, all the 'Banjara caravanners' of south India are identified as one and the same community, although they are called various names in different regions.[33]

The colonial anthropological notes and European traveller's accounts suggest the mixed social character of the Lambada community. As Enthoven says, the genealogy of social and racial compositions of the Lambadas was as complex as their homeland.[34] Malcolm supposes that the Lambadas were one of the lowest Rajput castes.[35] Most ethnographic notes of the period presume that the origins of a large bunch of south Indian Lambadas can be traced to the Charan and Bhat castes of western Rajputana and the Mathura Banjaras from the United Central Provinces. The Charan and Bhat

28 Edward Balfour, ed., *The Cyclopaedia of India and of Eastern and Southern Asia*, 5 vols., repr. (Graz: Akademische Druck U Verlagsanstalt, 1967), I: 270.

29 Crooke, *The Tribes and Castes*, I: 156.

30 Francis Buchanan, *Journey from Madras through the Countries of Mysore, Canara and Malabar*, 3 vols. (London: Fort Cadell and W. Davies, and Black Parry and Kingsbury, 1807), III: 432.

31 John Malcolm, *A Memoir of Central India, Including Malwa, and Adjoining Provinces, with the History, and Copious illustrations, of the Past and Present Condition of that Country*, 2 vols., repr. (New Delhi: Sagar Publication, 1970), II: 152.

32 Briggs, 'Account of the Origin', 176.

33 Iyer, *The Mysore Tribes*, II: 135.

34 Enthoven, *The Tribes and Castes*, II: 331.

35 Malcolm, *A Memoir of Central India*, II: 152.

castes were traditional genealogists during the high noon of the Rajput states. After those states were conquered by the Sultans and Mughals, they lost their patronage and many of them turned to transportation of grain and other forms of livelihood.[36] It is supposed that a large number of Charans and Bhats first joined the early caravanners as genealogists and protectors of their caravans and eventually merged into the communities of nomadic caravanners as traders and transporters; many of their groups then moved to south India.[37] The Malwa region of western and central India remained the hub of the Lambada trade activities throughout the medieval period. It appears that many communities of the regions merged with the Lambada caravanners in search of a livelihood. *Kunbis* (peasant castes), *Chamars*, *Mangs* and *Mahars* (agriculture labour and village servants), *Nhavis* (barbers) and downtrodden Muslims of these regions worked with the Lambadas as wage labourers. As these communities continually travelled with the Lambada caravaners, their ties with their parental castes broke down over a period of time and they eventually merged into the Lambada community.[38] Thus the Lambada community evolved gradually. Although mythological stories about the Lambadas, said to date from the early nineteenth century, claim their origin from Rajput ancestry, those in fact reflect their multi-racial/caste composition.[39]

It is noted in most accounts that the Lambadas of Hyderabad State originated from north-west India. The first arrival of the Lambadas in the south is mentioned in Perishta's *A History of the Rise and Progress of the Mahomedan Faith in the Country of Hind*. In 1417, a large convoy of caravanners' bullocks was seized by prince Khan Khanan, the brother of Feroze Shah Bahmuni, when the former rebelled and made an attempt on the throne of Gulburga, the Deccan capital.[40] However, there is ambiguity about their arrival in the south. Crooke suggests that the first mention of Banjaras in the south was made in the history of Mohammedans during Sikindar's attack on Dholpur

36 M. A. Sherring, ed., *The Tribes and Castes of Rajasthan*, repr. (Delhi: Cosmo Publication, 1975), 54; Malcolm, *A Memoir of Central India*, II: 99, 133.

37 Malcolm, *A Memoir* 170.

38 Enthoven, *The Tribes and Castes*, II: 333.

39 A note on the mythological origin of Lambadas is given in Appendix I.

40 Ferishta, *History of the Rise*, II: 243; also see Briggs, 'Account of the Origin', 174–76.

in 1504, and believes that a large convoy of Charan Banjaras came south with Asaf Jha (also called Asaf Khan), Wazir of Shahjahan, in 1630, under the leadership of Bhangi and Jhangi Naiks of the Rathod clan, with 180,000 bullocks, and that of Bhagwan Das Naik of the Vadtiya clan, with 52,000 bullocks.[41]

In contrast to this, John Briggs presumed that the Lambadas had been involved conspicuously in grain transportation in the south from the fifteenth century. They moved into the south largely with Mohammad Tughluk's army, which raided this region several times, as both transporters and soldiers. Among them, large groups came from Ujmeer (Ajmeer) under the leadership of Bhecca, who was widely worshipped by the Lambadas of Hyderabad. Briggs also notes that their history was not recorded for six generations, merely retaining the names of the lineal descendants from their founder, until the time of Sarung (called Bhangi, from his propensity to imbibe the intoxicating drug called *bhung*) and Bhagwan Vadtiya, the two chiefs under whose leadership the Lambadas moved south in large numbers. Sarung was carrying on the transport trade in the region of Dowlutabad, at the head of a large herd of three thousand bullocks driven by members of his clan. His playfulness resulted in his followers disobeying him and they dispersed in smaller groups all over the Deccan. Vadtiya, in contrast, was thrifty and of steady conduct; he united nearly the whole of his clan and controlled twelve thousand head of cattle. Briggs dates this development to the time of the Mughal emperor Aurangzeb's campaign against the rulers of Bijapur and Golconda. Like his predecessors, Aurangzeb employed a large Lambada horde in order to supply foodgrains to his army. Vadtiya supplied him with twelve thousand men and Sarunga Bhangi with one hundred and eighty thousand. The latter is said to have mobilised his entire Rathod clan for this purpose. They were also given a patent right to bring grains to the army without any duty and additionally three privileges: to take the thatch from any house when grass was scarce; to appropriate for their own use water which may be drawn and stored in pots ready for a family's use; and to indiscriminately plunder the enemy's country.[42]

41 Crooke, *The Tribes and Castes*, I: 151.

42 Briggs, 'Account of the Origin', 177–78.

Although there is considerable ambiguity in the historical records on the Lambadas' trade activities and their arrival in the south, what is clear is that they were traditionally involved in the food grain trade and transportation of goods to armies during their campaigns. After Aurangzeb's campaign many of them remained in the south, carrying on with their food grain trade and transportation. This was because the region offered great scope for the grain trade as it had been visited by recurring famines and drought. Under such circumstances, the transport of grain from one place to another became an occupation of considerable importance. As the Deccan was devoid of a single navigable river[43] and had no roads that allowed wheel-carriages, the entire trade was carried on with the help of laden bullocks.[44] The whole of the northern part of Hyderabad State and many parts of Madras Presidency were also hilly and forested, and even the caravans struggled to cross these regions.[45] There were few good roads in South India even in the first half of the nineteenth century. Enugula Veeraswammayya, who travelled from Chennapatam to Allahabad through Atmakur, Srisailam, Wanparthi, Nirmal, Edulabad and Nagpur towns, describes the woeful condition of the road and transportation system in Hyderabad State during the 1830s. Veeraswammayya says the roads between the Krishna and the Godavari rivers were not suitable even for walking.[46] Also, because of the political situation created by Aurangzeb's death, the region saw intense rivalry and warfare, which proved to be advantageous to the Lambadas.[47]

43 The rivers were not suited for long-distance navigation, being either swollen by the seasonal rains, or becoming too shallow in the hot season. Only in short and disconnected stretches were they at all navigable.

44 Briggs, 'Account of the Origin', 172.

45 *Manual of the Administration of the Madras Presidency, In Illustration of the records of Government & the Yearly Administration Reports*, ed. C. D. Maclean, repr. (New Delhi: Asian Education Service 1987), I: 19; Buchanan has also described how Lambada caravans struggled to cross hilly areas in the south. See his *Journey from Madras*, II: 18.

46 Enugula Veeraswammayya, *Kashiyatra Cheritra*, repr. (New Delhi, Asian Education Services, 1991), 30–49.

47 Mark Wilks, *Historical Sketches of the South of India*, repr. (Mysore: The Government Branch Press, 1932), 518

FRAGMENTED POLITICS, RIVALRIES AND CARAVAN TRADE

As mentioned above, the Lambadas of Hyderabad had a long association with commissariat transportation for the army. The same tradition was continued during the European colonial conquest of India. Nonetheless, during their engagement with the colonial and indigenous rulers, the Lambadas lost their relative independence over their trade and became gradually more dependent. In this context, it is important to examine the ways in which the colonial powers treated the Lambadas, and how it affected their trade network.

The Mohammedan campaigns in the south started from the late thirteenth century and ended with the Aurangzeb's death in 1707 which opened up intensive political rivalry , as the Mughal imperial power began to fade.[48] Succession rivalries and political instability in Delhi led the Governor of Deccan and other local powers to form independent regimes in south India. Once the Governor of the Deccan, Nizam ul Mulk, began to establish his independence, many other rulers also began asserting themselves, either by acquiring grants from the Delhi ruler or by declaring themselves independent rulers. The Peshwas established themselves in the Maratha region, and the Nawabs of Mysore in the Karnataka region under Haider Ali and Tippu Sultan. The Hindu Rajas of Tanjore and Travancore asserted their power in the far south. These developments created political rivalries and tensions throughout the region, as these newly emerged states vied with each other, and with the emerging European powers, to extend their territories and influence.[49]

It is needless here to go into the details of this politics, but by the middle of the eighteenth century, the Peshwas of Poona, the Nawabs of Mysore and the Nizams of Hyderabad stood out as the main rival powers in the south. Each was waiting for an opportunity to wage war against the other to extend its sovereignty in the region. The death in 1732 of the Nawab of Karnataka (the region was also

48 J. D. E. Gribble has given a detailed account of Mohammedan invasions of south India. See his *History of the Deccan*, 2 vols., repr. (New Delhi: Mittal Publicationa, 1990), I.

49 William Lee-Warner, *The Protected Princes of India* (London: Macmillan, 1894), 63–80; also see Regani, *Nizam–British Relations*, Preface, ii.

known as Arcot), who was a subordinate of the Nizam, resulted in a war of succession. A conflict was also witnessed when the first Nizam died in 1748. These wars led to intense rivalries among the rulers of the south, as each party was supported by the states of the region and some Europeans. Anglo-French rivalries in Europe, which were extended to India, added another dimension to the political situation. The three Karnataka wars between 1745 and 1763 saw the British emerging as the foremost power in the south. The Nizam concluded a treaty with the British in 1766 and joined with them against the rising power of Hyder Ali and Tippu Sultan. This resulted in four Anglo-Mysore wars between 1766 and 1799, which ended with Tippu's death in battle and the annexation of a major part of Mysore by the British. The Nizams were also in alliance with the British in three Anglo-Maratha wars in the years 1775–82, 1803–5 and 1817–18. After these wars, almost the whole of the Deccan came under the direct control of the British. The only major territories not controlled by them directly after 1818 were the states of Hyderabad and Mysore.[50]

In all these wars, the Lambadas were the main grain suppliers to all sides. Their services were acknowledged by all the imperial powers. They had particularly good relations with the Nizams, as they had served their armies from the times of Aurangzeb. The first Nizam employed them in large numbers during his early consolidation of the Deccan. He issued a special order stating:

Ranjan ka pani,
Chhappar ka ghas,
Din ka tin khun mu'af;
Aur jahan Asaf Jan ke ghore,
Wahan Bhangi Jhanji ka bail.[51]

This means 'if you can find no water elsewhere, you may even take it from the pots of my followers; grass you may take from the roofs of their huts; and if you commit three murders a day I will even pardon this, provided that wherever my cavalry is stationed,

50 Fraser, *Our Faithful Ally*, 27–97.

51 Syed Hassain Bilgrami and C. Willmott, *Historical and Descriptive Sketch of His Highness the Nizam's Dominions* (Bombay: The Times of India Steam Press, 1883), 344.

there I always find Bhangi Jhangi's bullocks.' Almost all of the ethnographic notes of the nineteenth century state that this order, which was engraved in golden letters on a copper plate, was in the possession of the Lambadas of Hyderabad. It is also noted that the British had issued similar orders.[52] The first Nizam constructed a separate gate for the Lambadas' herds to pass into the Golconda Fort.[53] There was also the practice of presenting the descendants of Bhangi (chief) with a *khillat* (a gift of turban cloth) from the Nizams of Hyderabad. It was considered a mark of great honour, when the Nizam used to present eight *thans* of *khadi* (a *than* equal to sixteen yards) every year, which the chief *naik* (headman or chief) used to tie his turban.[54] The British also continued this practice; after every war, the Lambada naiks and leaders were honoured with clothes, turbans and swords.[55] Whatever the façade, it was a kind of taming through which the imperial powers ensured the subordination of the Lambadas.

In the Karnataka wars, the Lambadas were first employed by the second Nizam, Nasir Jung, who gave a patent right dated 15 *Zeehuj* 1162H (15 November 1749) to Narayan Bhangi to furnish his army with supplies. Later, during the war, they were also employed by the enemy, the French, in the same capacity. In fact, when Bussy, the French chief commander, was losing ground in the Karnataka war, he used the Lambada horde residing at Char-Mahal in Hyderabad to protect him from the Nizam's army from 5 July till 15 August 1755. The first time that the Lambadas were employed by the British was during the war with Tippu Sultan in 1791–92, when the British commissariat arrangement failed. During that period, the allies, consisting of the Hyderabad and Poona armies, co-operated with the British troops from Madras, under the personal command of the Governor General of India, Cornwallis. In such a situation, it was the timely supply of provisions by the Lambadas that saved the British army from defeat. Bheema Naik Bhangi

52 Crooke, *The Tribes and Castes*, I: 151.

53 It is noted that Banjara gate of the Golconda Fort had a special attraction in many ways among all the eight gates. See Bilgrami, *Historical and Descriptive Sketch*, 511.

54 Hassan, *The Caste and Tribes*, 21.

55 *The Mysore Letters and Dispatches of the Duke of Wellington, 1799–1805* (Bangalore: Mysore Government Press, 1962), 68.

received a cash advance and a patent from Sir John Kennaway, the British Ambassador at Hyderabad; and his brother Somah received a similar reward from Cornwallis himself.[56] Colonel Mark Wilks gives an interesting description of the deployment of the Lambadas by Cornwallis. He recounts that about sixty thousand Lambada oxen had furnished the British army with grain from various parts, but chiefly from Coramandal.[57] Arthur Wellesley too employed the Lambadas massively in the last Mysore War and the second Maratha War. In fact, he was always engaged in collecting Lambada suppliers.[58] The Peshwas of Poona and Satara also employed them throughout their campaigns against the British and the Nizam.[59]

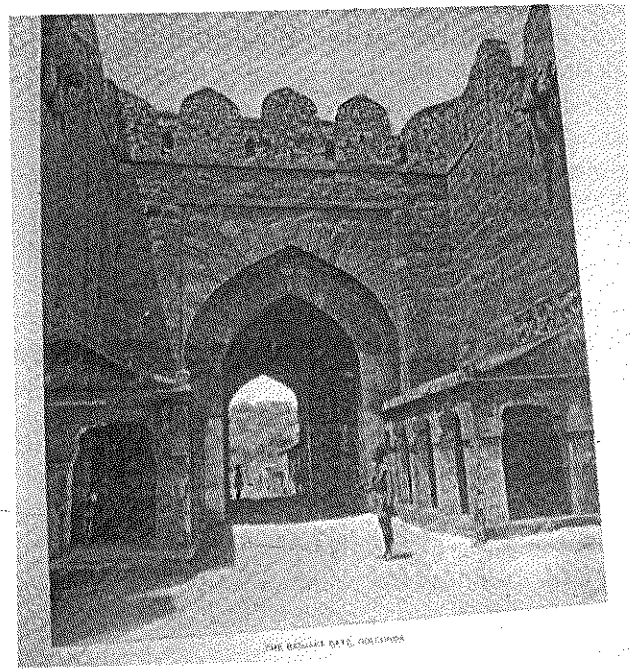


ILLUSTRATION 1: Photograph of Banjara gate of Golconda Fort. From A. C. Campbell, *Glimpses of the Nizam's Dominions* (London: William Watson and Co., 1898), 237.

56 Briggs, 'Account of the Origin', 182–3.

57 Wilks, *Historical Sketches*, 517.

58 *The Mysore Letters*, 84.

59 Bilgrami , *Historical and Descriptive Sketch*, 338.

The usual practice when engaging the Lambadas for commissariat transportation was to give them an unsecured advance to purchase grain from any part of the country. A patent order was simultaneously issued stating that the said party was recruited by the army and should not be stopped from procuring grains in any territory and that no duty should be levied on the grain. Upon their return, they were bound to give an account of the quantity of grain purchased, and were not permitted to open a single bag until they had obtained the permission of the commander-in-chief. They had to sell their goods at the average rate of the camp-market. After the disposal of the entire stock, they had to repay the original sum advanced to them and could only then distribute the remaining amount among themselves for their labour.[60] Such an arrangement sought to satisfy the mutual interests of both parties. According to Briggs:

> I have before premised that the English commander advanced large sums of money on this occasion to the Bunjaras (Lambadas), and I have reason to suppose that it was a thing which had never before been done; but what security he received for this advance, or for the due performance of the contract, I am unacquainted with; it was probably a compact of honour, but so blended with mutual interests that the parties had confidence in each other.[61]

A similar view is also presented in recent studies of the eighteenth century. Referring to the political rivalries of this period in south India, P. J. Marshall has stated that 'these wars were notoriously destructive, but the movements of huge armies created many opportunities for the enrichment of the Indians who supplied them, especially the Banjaras who followed the armies with their stocks of grain and other supplies.'[62] Recent studies of eighteenth century India have emphasised the positive side to the break-up of the Mughal Empire and the emergence of regional successor states, and it appears that the Lambadas and Banjaras were in a favourable position to benefit from this process. The wars in particular provided opportunities to the Lambadas and others because they created a number of army

60 Briggs, 'Account of the Origin', 186–187.

61 Ibid., 184.

62 P. J. Marshall, ed., *The Eighteenth Century in Indian History: Evolution and Revolution* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2003), 1.

camp markets. Army commanders extended protection to merchant communities from enemy forces during the war.[63] The situation was not, however, entirely advantageous to them.

To start with, the Lambadas were relatively independent merchants and transporters and had their own trade practices. Peter Mundy, a European traveller of the seventeenth century, stated that 'they (Lambadas) were basically independent traders buying food grains from rich areas and selling them in scarcity areas.'[64] But once they entered into a contract with the British colonisers, their trade activities were strictly regulated and monitored by army commanders and they lost their independence and monopoly over their trade. They were not allowed to sell the procured grain to either enemy forces or civilians. From Arthur Wellesley's correspondence it is reported that 'the Binjaries drop in by degrees, and I get a little from the country; but I have determined that not more Binjary rice shall go into the bazaar.'[65] In another instance he says that 'the Banjaras I look upon in the light of servants of the public, of whose grain I have a right to regulate the sale.'[66] Although precolonial rulers had also regulated and monitored their trade, the patents issued to them by the Mughals and the Nizams suggest that they were given a freer hand in many ways previously, as they were allowed to determine the source from which to procure grain, to ensure reasonable prices and given a right to obtain fodder for their cattle.

Market prices were generally higher than military camp prices, and this used to tempt the Lambadas who were carrying grain and other goods to the camps. The British set out a number of regulations to check such sales, and held a breach of them to be a serious crime. From the time of the last Mysore war, a native commissary of the East India Company always accompanied the caravans to ensure that there was no such breach of contract.[67] During this war, the allied forces employed huge caravans. The British were served by 35,000 pack-bullocks under the leadership of Bheema Naik Bhangi,

63 Siddiqi, *Trade and Finance*, 40–41.

64 *The Travels of Peter Mundy in Europe and Asia, 1608–1667*, ed. Richard Carnac Temple, 5 vols. (London: Cambridge University Press, 1914), II: 95.

65 *The Mysore Letters*, 141.

66 Russell, *The Tribes and Castes*, II: 170.

67 NAI, HRR (misc.), Vol. 225, 1 January 1800–2 December 1801, 357.

the Nizam by 26,000 pack-bullocks under the leadership of Latchu Naik Bhangi, and various commanders a further 23,000 under other leaders.[68] A special army unit under an *amildar* (subordinate military officer) closely monitored each caravan.[69]

Fluctuations in market prices during wars had a serious effect on the Lambadas' caravan trade and they could depress their profits, as prices often went up at the start of a war and fell at its end. As a result, the Lambadas often incurred losses. This was the case during the last Mysore war. When this war was about to break out, the services of Lambadas were employed. The British Resident at Hyderabad advanced Rs 150,000 to their chief, Bheema Naik, at Hyderabad to supply grain to the army marching towards Seringapatam. Before capturing Seringapatam, there were distress conditions across the region and the grain prices had suddenly shot up. One *seer* (one kilogram) of rice was being sold at two rupees. Even the army experienced a serious food shortage. The Nizam's army under the command of Colonel Sir John Malcolm had 25,000 bullock-loads of grain, but it was stuck below the ghats. The army under the command of General Harris experienced considerable distress during its advance to Seringapatam for want of grain. The general heard that Bheema Naik with a supply of 15,000 bullock-loads was at the foot of the ghats and sent a detachment to protect him from the enemy forces. But by the time Bheema Naik's bullocks reached the destination, the British army had captured Seringapatam. They opened the large granaries of Tippu and that brought down the price to thirty seers of rice for a rupee. However, the British general ultimately adhered to the contract and purchased the entire stock at five seers for a rupee. But if the Naik had reached before the fall of Seringapatam, he would have made a greater profit. It was also possible that had he reached even later he would have been ruined, as the rates were falling rapidly.[70] For the Lambadas this was a fairly regular experience when supplying to the army. The army records show that the Lambadas had to occasionally demand payment at

68 John Briggs, 'Account of the Origin', 187.

69 NAI, HRR (misc.), Vol. 225, 1 January 1800–2 December 1801, 357.

70 Briggs, 'Account of the Origin', 186.

appropriate rates, as the army commander who was supposed to make the payment was always busy with war.[71]

The British forces resented the Lambadas' monopoly in food grain transportation and treated them harshly, especially after the last Mysore war. The Chief Commanding Officer of the force in 1801 submitted a strong proposal to the Chief Secretary of Government of India to bring changes in the agreement with the Lambada carriage. As per the new agreement, it was decided to pay them at the wholesale market price, which was three rupees for one bullock load.[72] It obviously cut down their profits, as the wholesale price was less than the retail one. The Lambadas usually purchased the grains from the villages and were often ignorant of prices in the urban centres. This sometimes caused them great losses. The commanding chiefs and other officials also proposed that they establish their own carriage system to break the Lambadas' monopoly.[73] Arthur Wellesley was particularly suspicious of the Lambadas, as is seen from his field notes. He suggested to the commanding officer not to make their purchases duty-free, presuming that they would take advantage of this concession in the future or after the war period.[74] The army took it for granted that the bullocks would be accessible at all times during a war. It was very difficult for the Lambadas to feed their cattle, as fodder was expensive during the war. Indeed, most of their earnings were spent on feeding the cattle, which left very little for their subsistence, as the commanding officer used to force them to accompany the army.[75]

The Lambadas were also accused of looting war-stricken regions. Depredation of the enemy's country at the end of the war was a regular practice by armies at this time, and the Lambadas, too, were certainly culpable of this.[76] After the capture of Seringapatam, a small horde of Lambadas in the employment of the British army attempted to leave, and suspecting that they intended to loot the

71 NAI, HRR (misce.), Vol.3, 2 December 1791–24 June 1794, 9.

72 NAI, HRR (misce.), Vol. 225, 1 January 1800–2 December 1801, 359.

73 Ibid., 365.

74 *The Mysore Letters*, 77.

75 *The Dispatches of Field Martial the Duke of Wellington KG, During his Campaign from 1799 to 1818*, com. Gurwood, 6 vols. (London: IOL, V6393), II: 308–9.

76 Buchanan narrates innumerable incidents of Lambada depredations in Karnataka. See his *Journey from Madras*, II: 143–4,150,165,175,186,190; III: 432, 435.

conquered region, the Subsidiary Forces intercepted them and hanged seven of their principal naiks.[77] The armies of the British and the Nizams carried out many such brutal hangings, especially after the last Maratha War of 1817–18.[78] The Peshwas, too, as mentioned above, employed about forty thousand Lambadas in their campaign against the British for food grain supply. The Lambadas had particularly good relations with the Marathas as the latter gave them a free hand in procuring grain and paid them high prices .[79] After the defeat of the Peshwas, many local zamindars and talukdars formed armed bands with those Lambadas and fought against the British expansion into their territories. The British saw this as freebooting, to be crushed with a ruthless use of force. Many Lambada naiks involved in such resistance were hanged publicly.[80] This led to them being stigmatised by the British as a predatory community a stigma that haunted them throughout the colonial period.

After the Maratha wars, the British created its own commissariat force that hired its pack animals and supplied food grains to their army. They also continued to hire many Lambadas as transporters.[81] These arrangements came to an end after the railway connected the major army stations later in the nineteenth century. Similarly, the Lambadas also lost their traditional commissariat transportation rights with the Nizam. The Company formed the Hyderabad Contingency in 1812, consisting of British soldiers and the Nizam's army, to assist the Nizam. After the last Maratha war it was encamped permanently at Bolaram (Secunderabad), Aurangabad, Hingoli, Ellichpur, Mominabad, Gulbarga, Warangal, Mucktal, Lingasugar and Jalna and hardly moved, except during the 1857 revolt.[82]

With the loss of their chief livelihood, the Lambadas became financially vulnerable and in time fell into the clutches of big traders and merchant moneylenders. Malcolm, writing in the 1820s,

77 Briggs, 'Account of the Origin', 186.

78 Reginald George Burton, *History of the Hyderabad Contingent* (Calcutta: The Superintendent of Government Printing, 1905), 75.

79 *The Mysore Letters*, 140.

80 NAI, HRR, Vol. 568, part. II: 1782–1888, 378.

81 NAI, HRR, Vol. 64, 1782–1888, 279.

82 Henry George Briggs, *The Nizam: His History and Relations with the British Government*, 2 vols. repr. (Delhi: Manas Publication, 1985), II: 162.

observed that the *Hoonda Barawallahs*, who were both moneylenders and contract carriers to big merchants, were giving Lambadas advances at high interest rates. Once under their control, they could force the Lambadas to provide transport for them at very low rates. Malcolm also noted how the Lambada caravans suffered losses from being harassed at the customs houses at each territorial border.[83] Although this had been a widespread phenomenon in the caravan trade also in the precolonial period, the Lambadas had previously enjoyed enough economic strength to weather such demands. In all, their reduced circumstances under colonial rule meant that they now lacked the resilience to defend their interests effectively.

ORGANISATION OF THE 'THANDA' AND CARAVAN TRADE

It is important here to discuss the formation of the *thanda* (Lambada camp/settlement), which was a crucial element in the operation of the caravan trade. The Lambada community was divided into thandas based on their transportation and trade engagements, and each thanda had a monopoly over a particular item and region. The thanda was also crucial in the making of the Lambada community as it constituted a common social and moral order of the caravan people. A thanda was a trading group and its naik (chief) was the agent for the group's trade and transportation engagements. The literal meaning of 'thanda' is 'a camp', comprising a large number of people with pack bullocks.[84] It finds a mention in the writings of many late medieval travellers and colonial officials. Peter Mundy writes that he met a huge thanda caravan of grain transporters on 14 December 1630 on his way to the Deccan from Burhampur.[85] Colonel Tod also used the term 'thanda' and 'Banjara' interchangeably.[86]

It was, as mentioned above, the general practice in trade agreements for one member of a thanda, generally the chief naik, to take the initiative and draw up a contract with a king or his subordinate ruler. According to the agreement, the chief naik

83 Malcolm, *A Memoir of Central India*, I: 95.

84 Hassan, *The Castes and Tribes*, 15.

85 *The Travels of Peter Mundy*, II: 54.

86 James Todd, *Annals and Antiquities of Rajasthan*, ed. William Crooke, 3 vols. (London: Oxford University Press, 1920), III: 751.

would mobilise and employ other Lambadas from different groups. If required, he would also employ non-Lambadas from various lower castes that engaged in manual labour in villages. Each thanda was again divided into small groups and put under a sub-leader (sub-naik). The sub-naik's position was generally given to the individual who mobilised or gathered that particular group. He was instrumental in carrying on trade. The entire thanda was the proprietor of the general stock that they procured for trade or transportation purposes, and they shared the profits after settling the advance that they received from their employers. However, the chief naik was considered to be the chief proprietor of the caravan and had the exclusive right of appropriating to his own use everything that was presented to him by his employers. He was seated on a *gadi* (seat of power) created by Sarunga Bhangi who came to the south with Aurangzeb's army. There were only four chief naiks at the end of the eighteenth century. Each main clan had one chief naik. Such a 'clan' did not necessarily imply kinship or a blood relationship, but rather represented a group of people gathered under a leader for the purpose of grain transportation. The main clans were Rathod, Vadtiya, Powar and Chowhan. Although the chief naiks were supposed to gain their authority from the assent of their followers, in time the post had become hereditary, being generally passed on to the eldest son. In practice, they held absolute power over their people. A *karbhari* (secretary), who was elected by the clan as a whole, assisted them.[87]

Although the transporting of grain was largely monopolised by the Lambadas, and operated within the community's set of rules, there were frequent fights between the chief naiks for patent or commissariat rights for army transportation. Indeed, their employers often stirred up rivalries between the clans for their own advantage. When in 1749 Narayan Bhangi Rathod was given a patent by the Nizam, Vadtiya Naik demanded a similar patent, to no avail. This fanned the hatred between the two groups and violence ensued. When a large group of Rathods camped in the neighbourhood of Badrachalam, situated in the vicinity of the Godavari river, lying to the north-east of Hyderabad, the Vadtiyas attacked them. The Rathods suffered severely, but managed to take one female Vadtiya

87 John Briggs, 'Account of the Origin', 178–79.

captive. A few months later they came into conflict again at a place called Ramagoorum, on the banks of the Krishna River. A violent fight ensued in which the Rathods were completely defeated, suffering severe losses in terms of both men and property; above all they lost the order of patent right given to the Rathods by Aurungzeb. This is said to have happened in the time of Bussy, in the middle of the eighteenth century. Although it was the last dispute of its kind, the practice of giving presents to the thanda naiks by the British and the Nizam continued to create rivalries between the groups.[88]

The Lambada caravaners were divided into four clans or thandas, but they followed common social codes. In the course of time, the thanda became a distinguishing feature of the Lambada community as they evolved their own cultural and belief systems and language. The thanda constituted and reflected every element of their lives: power, politics, clan and lineage, domination and subordination, culture, religion and identity.[89] Thus the thanda was a multi-layered and multipurpose system that developed in the course of their nomadic life and continued in their settled lives. A set of social codes were probably drawn up at the beginning of the eighteenth century, during the period of Sarunga Bhangi, to govern all the thandas.[90] The clan was the principal social base of a thanda, even when the Lambadas scattered into small groups and settled permanently in the later period. Each thanda consisted of only one clan. Those who joined the thanda in search of a livelihood from other castes had to take on the clan name of the thanda. The practice was to assimilate 'outcastes' into the thanda community. There is insufficient proof to suggest when this custom actually evolved, but it is widely mentioned in most of the ethnographic notes of the late nineteenth century. According to this custom, after a few years the new member, called the *jangad* (outcaste absorbed into the thanda), would give a feast to all the members of the thanda. The members of the thanda would partake of the meal and declare the newly enlisted person to be a member of the thanda; and he was given the thanda's clan

88 A. C. Lyall, *Gazetteer for the Haidarabad Assigned District, commonly called Berar* (Bombay: Education Society Press, 1870), 196; also see Briggs, 'Account of the Origin', 182.

89 Malcolm, *A Memoir of Central India*, II: 152.

90 Briggs, 'Account of the Origin', 179.

name. After this ceremony the jangad was treated as an equal and allowed to enter into matrimonial relations with the Lambadas. Thus, many people from other communities joined the Lambada community. The thanda also had a group of entertainers called the Dhadi, Bhat and Dapadya, who were an integral part of the thanda and would amuse the thanda people on all social occasions. The jangads and the entertainers occupied the lowest rung in the thanda hierarchy.[91]

The naik's power over the thanda being total, nothing could take place there without his knowledge. One had to take his permission even to have marital relations with someone from another thanda. He was the sole executive and judiciary of the thanda. His role in settling criminal and civil disputes was crucial. The cases that were placed before the thanda panchayat generally dealt with marital and sexual concerns. In the early caravan days, promiscuous sexual relations were common and these often resulted in violence. The clan barriers were not observed when it came to marital relations, and sometimes they also married outside their own Lambada community. To avoid confusion, Sarunga Bhangi established a code that if a clan member was guilty of marrying within the clan, the act should be considered as incest, and the criminal expelled from the thanda and the community. From then onwards, a clan with the same name was considered a fraternity, and women, though not the men, were expected to be chaste.[92] The same institution continues in the Lambada community today. According to the codes of the thanda panchayat, a person could not be punished in any way without being first tried by a jury of five, consisting of the naik and others of the thanda, who were selected by the accused or both the accused and the victim. The jury held long discussions before giving its judgement, and the agreement was considered binding on both parties. Despite this, swords were sometimes drawn, and the onlookers had to intervene to stop a fight. It was the practice that the man who thought the issue settled took off his turban, and threw it full length between the parties. The parties would then have to agree to his suggestion.[93]

91 Russell, *The Tribes and Castes*, II: 183.

92 Briggs, 'Account of the Origin', 179.

93 Ibid., 180.

The harshest punishment was expulsion from the thanda. The guilty party was taken to the outskirts of the thanda, beaten with his own *cheppal* (footwear) four times and expelled. None in the same thanda or no group from an established thanda was to receive him; those who violated the rule were called by the panchayat and fined. In most cases, the guilty were punished by fines: petty crimes were fined five rupees, the intermediate fine was Rs 12, and the most severe fine was Rs 30. The entire amount was generally spent on bhung and *daru* (country liquor). The thanda panchayat would not usually wish to impose a death sentence, except in the case of murder. The sentence was executed by friends and relatives of the victim, who had to put the murderer to death within a period of three days after the deed was committed, after which no one should try to take revenge.[94]

A writer in the East India Company at Bombay, James Forbes, described a Lambada thanda in the last quarter of the eighteenth century. The thanda consisted of a set of merchants who did not belong to any particular territory. They lived in tents unitedly for mutual comfort and safety in the transportation of their merchandise. They were governed by their own laws.[95] Thus the values practised among the groups of thandas not only served to organise and carry out the caravan trade efficiently, but also created a community of caravanners.

When the thanda embarked on procuring grain, the entire group would move together, including the families. Before entering a war zone, however, they often lodged their families at suitable distant places.[96] The length of a thanda when travelling was about one-and-a-half miles. They travelled six to seven miles a day.[97] This train often travelled with loaded bullocks for about 1,500 to 2,000 miles during times of war or when there were fairs to sell and procure food grains.[98]

94 Ibid., 181.

95 James Forbes, *Oriental Memoirs: A Narrative of Seventeen Years Residence in India*, 2 vols., repr. (London: Richard Bentley, 1834), II: 276.

96 Wilks, *Historical Sketches*, 517.

97 *The Travels of Peter Munday*, II: 36, 95.

98 Forbes, *Oriental Memoirs*, II: 277.

The Lambadas' caravan trade was crucial in building a market network in rural Hyderabad. Although large groups of Lambadas were involved in supplying food grains to the army, many of them traded independently. After they lost their traditional commissariat rights with the army in the early nineteenth century, many lived by trading in food grains in the rural areas of Hyderabad State and the adjacent British territories.[99] At the beginning of the second decade of the nineteenth century Briggs noted that the four clans of the Lambadas were well spread out. The Rathod clan possessed 90,000 pack-bullocks spreading from the head of the river Wurdh in Gondwana to Cuddappah through Nirmal, Hyderabad, Kurnool, and the confines of the Mysore. They were distributed as follows: 50,000 in Hyderabad, 4,000 in Aurangabad, 24,000 in Poona and the Konkan and 12,000 in the ceded Districts. The Vadtiyas possessed 80,000 pack-bullocks and were spread between Chicacolem and Nellore of the Madras Presidency. The Chowhans possessed 18,000 pack-bullocks, occupying a line of country between south of Nellore and modern Karnataka. The Powars were the least significant, possessing only 12,000 pack-bullocks, trading mostly between Ganjam and Gondwana. Although associated with particular regions, each group was frequently on the move, ranging all over south India.[100]

The Lambadas largely traded in food grains and salt, employing a sort of barter system. They carried salt, rice, piece goods of native manufacturers, raw silk, spices, oil-seeds, sugar, dried coconuts, jaggery, tobacco, salt-fish, opium, and betel leaves from various ports of coastal Madras Presidency to the interior part of Hyderabad State, and, in return, took cotton, food grains like wheat, *ragi*, *jawar* (millets) and other millets, pulses, tamarind, wax and iron.

The Lambadas used to sell their procured goods and grain at advantageous rates in the rural areas on their way between two territories. When their herds passed through the villages, the people bought salt, food grain and other items from them. If anything remained after their long journey, they would sell them at the

99 Maulavi Cheragh Ali, *Hyderabad (Deccan) Under Sir Salar Jung*, 4 vols. (Bombay: Education Society Press, 1886), IV: 397; Forbes, *Oriental Memoirs*, I: 276–77; also see Vaikuntham, *State, Economy and Social Transformation*, 159.

100. Briggs, 'Account of the Origin', 192–193.

weekly fairs in the Hyderabad State and coastal districts of Madras Presidency.[101] The *Manual of the District of Vizagapatam* noted that 'there is a market held in almost every village once a week at which you find the Brinjaries and low country traders making their bargains.'[102] Similarly, weekly fairs were the main network of rural marketing in Hyderabad State. There were about 250 weekly fairs in Telangana and about 700 in the Marathwada regions. There were also about 2,437 *uruses, melas* and *jataras* (fairs and pilgrimages) in the state where there was a large volume of trading. The Lambadas used all of these markets to exchange the goods that they brought from the coastal regions.[103]

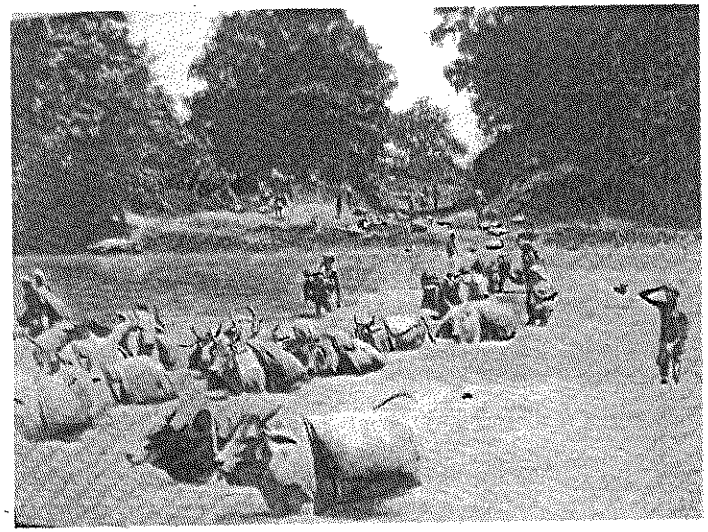


Illustration 2: Photograph of a Lambada caravan of pack-bullocks. From *Census of India 1941, Hyderabad State*, I, appendix.

The Lambadas also acted as hired transporters to the East India Company and the native merchants. In fact, they carried on

101 Balfour, *On the Ethnology of Hyderabad*, 10–12; also see A. V. Ramana Rao, *Economic History of Andhra Pradesh, 1766–1957* (Bombay: Popular Book Depot, 1958), 130.

102 *A Manual of the District of Vizagapatam in the Presidency of Madras*, repr. (Hyderabad: District Gazetteers Andhra Pradesh, 1994), 121.

103 Vaikuntham, *State, Economy and Social Transformation*, 159.

the whole of the external trade between Hyderabad and Madras. Naryanapuram, between Hyderabad and Masulipatam, which was the main trading centre of the Company from the late eighteenth century, was a great emporium of trade and had several warehouses and godowns for storing goods in transit. The Lambadas' bullocks were employed by the traders to transport finished silk, chintzes, tin, copper, carpets, rose water, fine cloth and other products of Masulipatam, Bengal, Ganjam, Vizagapatam and Chicacolem from Naryanapuram to the Nizam's country and, in return, they brought articles like wax, honey, cotton and wheat.[104] The hiring rates offered by the Company and merchants varied from place to place. In Vizagapatam and Vizianagaram, the Lambadas were offered four *annas* (an anna was sixteenth part of a rupee) for a bullock for nine to ten *coss* (miles) at the beginning of the nineteenth century.[105]

REGULATED MARKET AND MARGINALISATION OF THE LAMBADA CARAVAN

The question here is how such a well-organised trade was destroyed, with its practitioners being reduced to acute poverty. Most ethnographic studies claim that the marginalisation of the Lambadas was brought about by their ingrained cultural values. Their wandering habits, religious practices and habitual drunkenness were seen to be at the root of their poverty and ruin.[106] This was a typical Orientalist argument, and it is not given much credence by more recent historians who argue that the caravan trade was destroyed primarily by the emergence of modern forms of transport, particularly the railway.[107] C. A. Bayly's study on North India suggests that the nomadic groups, including the Banjaras, lost their livelihood with the decline of the Mughal Empire, and they settled as either agriculturists or pastoral cattle breeders in the eighteenth century and played an important role in agricultural

104 Ramana Rao, *Economic History*, 44.

105 Ibid, 49.

106 Briggs, 'Account of the Origin', 193.

107 Varady has argued that the two major developments that contributed to the eclipse of Banjaras as large-scale transporters were metalled roads and the railway system. See his 'North Indian Banjaras', 5.

production.[108] D. A. Washbrook's study on the south observed that the construction of roads for military purposes undermined the Lambadas' economy. After they lost their transporting occupation, the Lambadas settled down as agriculturists in the forested areas and greatly contributed to the expansion of agriculture in the eighteenth century.[109] It must be mentioned that these eighteenth century studies largely portrayed the positive side of the historical developments, and they fail to bring out the magnitude of the Lambada's loss which was not brought about only by the decline in the caravan trade. Indeed, they continued to practise this trade in a reduced way right down to the last quarter of the nineteenth century. My argument here is that although the introduction of railways hastened the destruction of the caravan trade, the grounds for its destruction were laid by changes in the market economy that were brought about by colonial taxes and regulations from the early years of the nineteenth century onwards.

For example, new salt regulations and taxes imposed by the East India Company hit the Lambadas hard, as the trade in salt was central to their whole trading cycle. In the past, they had carried salt from the coastal regions that stretched from Ganjam to Nellore, where local castes produced it in extensive saltpans. They exchanged it for cotton grown in the Marathwada region, which was emerging as one of the foremost cotton-growing areas in India.[110] The cotton industries in the Andhra region largely depended on the cotton produced there, and much was also exported beyond the region and even abroad.[111] This trade had provided the Lambadas with a very profitable livelihood.[112] The salt trade was brought under the Company's monopoly from 1215F (1805–6). Salt farms and factories were established along the coast that were supervised by special officers or sub-collectors and strictly regulated.[113] Subsequently, salt prices increased abruptly. In 1802, the price had been between Rs

108 Bayly, *Rulers, Townsmen*, 219–226.

109 Washbrook, 'Progress and Problems', 80.

110 Maulavi Cheragh Ali, *Hyderabad (Deccan)*, IV: 397; also see Raman Rao, *Economic History*, 144.

111 Fraser, *Our Faithful Ally*, 351–72; also see Vaikuntham, *State, Economy and Social Transformation*, 161.

112 Ibid., 41.

113 *Gazetteer of the Nellore District* (Madras: Government Press, 1942), 289.

28 and Rs 35 per *garce* (120 Indian maunds). The price increased to Rs 70 per garce in 1805, Rs 105 in 1809, and Rs 180 in 1844.[114] In addition, heavy custom duties were imposed and the caravans were frequently stopped in transit. The lower officials at the saltpans fraudulently weighed salt while selling to buyers, taking some *mamul* (bribe) from the buyers. This practice was well known and the custom officials began stopping the Lambadas at every *chowki* (customs outpost) to detect the fraud or excess weighing. Paying mamul at every custom chowki was a regular practice; sometimes the custom official would plunder the Lambada caravans if they did not offer mamul. These practices interrupted the Lambadas' trade. The extortions doubled the cost of salt by the time the caravan reached Hyderabad.[115]

Many Lambadas stopped going to the saltpans from the 1820s. This had a serious impact on the weaving industries of the coastal districts as they were largely dependent on the Lambadas' cotton supply. Realising the situation, the Madras government reduced the salt price from Rs 105 to Rs 70 per garce in 1820. But this did not attract the Lambadas as the customs officials still extracted heavy bribes.[116] The sale of salt in the farms also fell drastically. From 1800 to 1822, salt sold to the Lambadas at the Masulipatam saltpans was about 5,000 maunds annually, which was a drastic decrease compared to previous years.[117] In Nellore and Ongole districts, the salt revenue decreased from Rs 534,779 to Rs 249,714 between 1805 and 1807.[118] Apart from the customs officials' extraction, there were a number of other restrictions on the Lambadas' movement. As there were no proper roads in the coastal districts, the Lambadas' caravans had to pass through the fields, and when they crossed certain districts with their loaded cattle, they sometimes destroyed the grain that was growing there. Hence, in places like Masulipatam, they were allowed to travel only through certain villages during certain specified periods of the year, ranging from 24 September

114 *A Manual of the District of Vizagapatam*, 291.

115 NAI, HRR, political, file no. 3/1860–65, 1; also see Raman Rao, *Economic History*, 135.

116 *A Manual of the District of Vizagapatam*, 290.

117 Rao, *Economic History*, 144–45.

118 *Gazetteer of the Nellore District*, 291.

to 6 June.[119] Thus the monopolistic high prices, customs exactions, measurements malpractices and other restrictions began to hamper the Lambadas' caravan within the British territories.[120]

The Lambada caravans also encountered a similar hostile reception when they entered Hyderabad State. Before we discuss the ways in which the Lambadas' trade activities were undermined, it is important to look at the deployment of the Commercial Treaty of 1802 between the Nizam and the British Indian government. It was under this treaty that the state's market regulation and economy was restructured along modern lines. It played an important role in destroying many long-standing market relations as well as promoting the emergence of new trading communities in the state. Above all, the treaty made the Hyderabad economy perpetually dependent. The British undermined the trade and prosperity of many Princely States through customs policies that benefited trade in British areas at the expense of those states.[121]

The Hyderabad Residency Records of the eighteenth and early nineteenth century reveal that market regulations hardly existed in the state at that time. The British, however, considered the existing market practices to be irrational and an obstacle to healthy trade and commerce. In particular, they accused the *jagirdars* and *maktadars* (traditional landlords) of hampering trade activities in the state.[122] Bearing this in mind, they forced the Nizam to implement new market regulations. The preamble of the 1802 treaty stated that 'a well regulated commerce is essential to the opulence and prosperity of the people and to the wealth and power of the state and that a free and secure commercial intercourse tends to maintain and improve the relation of amity, peace and concord between contiguous nations.'[123] Whether such regulations added to the prosperity of the people and the region is a moot point, but

119 Rao, *Economic History*, 39.

120 Ibid., 137.

121 Hardiman shows how long-standing economy and market relations in the Princely States of Rajasthan and Saurashtra were undermined by the colonial state in the early nineteenth century in order to benefit trade in British areas at the cost of the Princely States. See his *Feeding the Baniya*, 56–57.

122 NAI, HRR, Vol. 825, 1782–1888, 204.

123 *Legal and Expert Opinions on the Commercial Treaty of 1802, Hyderabad State* (Hyderabad: Government Central Press, 1932), 1.

they definitely helped the colonial power to squeeze a surplus from the productive resources of the state. The Residents at Hyderabad played a key role in moulding the Nizam's and his Prime Ministers' views about the need to establish new market regulations and make trade more open and profitable.[124] A number of regulations were laid down in the treaty to regulate market activities between the two territories. According to the third article of the treaty, transit duty was abolished on all articles transiting from one part of the British territories to another through Hyderabad State and vice versa. According to the fourth article, *rahdarri* (toll) duties and local imposition were abolished. Article five of the treaty restricted the imposition of duty to 5 per cent on all articles of merchandise of whatever kind imported into Hyderabad State and vice versa.[125] In short, the treaty abolished all other duties and fixed an import duty of 5 per cent. This treaty thus created a free flow of goods between the two territories.

Another important component of the treaty was the establishment of customs houses, and following it, the Nizam's government established *nakas* (customs houses) on all the main roads in 1808.[126] From the middle of the nineteenth century, market regulation took on a greater momentum. The British Indian government realised that unless customs houses were erected on the borders of the Nizam's territories it would be difficult to regulate the influx of goods into both the territories and to collect duties, and they put strong pressure on the Nizam to do this in the late 1840s.[127] After Salar Jung became the Prime Minister of Hyderabad State in 1853, the treaty was reviewed once again in1855. Both the governments agreed to strict implementation of the norms of the treaty and to erect customs houses on the borders with the British territories, which the Nizam's government then did.[128] The British Indian

124 Regani gives a fascinating account of how Residents had been pressuring the Nizam and Prime Ministers to carry out land revenue reforms and trade regulations, see her *Nizam-British Relations*.

125 *Legal and Expert Opinions on the Commercial Treaty*, 3.

126 NAI, HRR, Vol. 637, 1782–1888, 131.

127 ibid., 227.

128 NAI, HRR, Political, file no. 3/1860–65, 38. Customs posts were, for instance, set up at Nuldroog (Bombay road), Moogaputtum (near Aurangabad), Lingsagur

government also set up number of its own customs check posts along the borders.[129]

Although the transit duty was abolished in Hyderabad State under the Treaty of 1802, the local customs officials continued to collect it. The situation was particularly bad in the jagirdar areas. In this regard, the British Indian government wrote a letter in 1873 to Salar Jung to stop the collection of transit duty in the state. In reply, Salar Jung asked the British Indian government to suggest a way of stopping this practice. They produced a scheme that Salar Jung then agreed to implement. According to this scheme, merchants carrying goods between British territories through Hyderabad State had to carry a receipt. The receipt would contain the details of the name of the trader, place of residence, description of goods, rate at which purchased, and place in the British territory to which they were being carried. This receipt was to be produced before the first nakadar of Hyderabad State at the border, and he would grant the merchant *dhakala* (proof receipt), retaining the old one with him. This dhakala was then produced again before the last nakadar in the Hyderabad territory, who would likewise examine the details of the receipt and permit the goods to pass, retaining the receipt. The two receipts would be then forwarded to the Central Customs House of the state for filing and future reference in case of disputes. If any goods were disposed of or purchased in the Hyderabad territories, they were taxed by the nakadars according to the existing rules, which was 5 per cent of the value of the commodity.[130]

Salar Jung was also instructed to change the internal market practices. A customs department similar to those in British India was established in 1860, and all non-official transit duties and other exactions were banned by law. Jagirdars and maktadars were no longer allowed to collect duties from traders. They were compensated for this loss to their revenues with compensation in the form of *jagirs* (land grant), yielding an aggregate revenue of Rs.

(west of Raichur), Kodhad (Masulipatam road), Warapilly (Madras road) and Rajoorah (Nagpur and Berar road).

129 NAI, HRR, Political, file no. 1/1862–65, 9.

130 NAI, HRR, Vol. 825, 1782–1888, 204-07.

285,500 per annum, and also Rs. 26,313 in cash.[131] Ironically, rather than being curtailed, malpractices and fraud, if anything, increased in the state thereafter.[132]

The new rules worked against the interests of the Lambada caravanners, who were unable to handle the methodology and paperwork of the new regulations. Customs official would for example demand that they show dhakala for the goods they were carrying. Sometimes, even though they were carrying the dhakala, they were still stopped and harassed for mamul by the chowkidars. They were of course also made to stick to the route for which they had got passes, and had to pay fines if they deviated from it. Since they travelled with huge cattle herds, it was difficult for them to stick to a pre-determined route.[133] If they breached the rules and changed their travelling routes, they were tracked down when they appeared at the village fairs or in the towns, and their property was confiscated.[134] This problem was more serious in the British territories as the market and customs regulations were strictly implemented there. In 1898, Lalchand and four other Lambadas of Hyderabad State were travelling with twenty-five heads of cattle and six carts of jawar through Kandesh district (Berar) and were apprehended in Dholi *taluka* (sub-division of a district). They were brought before the local magistrate for not producing the customs duty receipts. The magistrate after consulting the Resident at Hyderabad valued the cattle at Rs 445 and the grain at Rs 75. A fine was collected from them, which was double the actual customs duty.[135] Such experiences were common both in the British and the Nizam's territories. In fact, according to the agreement of 1865 between the two governments, salt was exempted from export and import duty, but a rate of two rupees per *pullah* or 120 seers was imposed as import duty, which was uniform throughout India, which was 25 per cent of the prevailing salt price. On top of this, the

131 *Report on the Administration of the Revenue and Allied Departments of H.H. the Nizam's Government for 1324 F (1914–15)* (hereafter Nizam Revenue Administration Report) (Hyderabad-Dn.: The Gladstone Press, 1916), 46–9.

132 NAI, HRR, Political, file no. 3/1860–65, 38.

133 APSA, NCD, Inst. 13, List. 1, S. no. 1243, File no. R4/d226/1831, 8–12; APSA, NRAD, Inst 13, List.1, S. no. 1172, File no. R4/d195/1927, 1, 32.

134 APSA, NCD, Inst. 13, List. 1, S. No. 1243, File no. R4/d226/1831, 12.

135 APSA, NRAD, Inst. 13, List. 1, S. no. 388, File no. R4/d46/1898, 2–8.

customs officials used to collect rahdarri and transit duty from the Lambadas. The Lambadas were particularly harassed for dhakala at every customs chowki as they were continually on the move.[136] The criminal stigma attached to the Lambadas during the nineteenth century in both British India and Hyderabad meant that their activities and movements were closely scrutinised, and they suffered correspondingly.

They suffered also as the trade at many local markets, fairs, jataras and uruses became unviable due to the new customs duties and trade regulations in the state.[137] The Administration Report of 1884–85 observed that 'the fairs suffered seriously from the vexatious transit dues extracted at almost every village on the road leading to Malligaon.'[138] As the local fairs wound up, trade activities shifted to small towns and urban centres where conditions were less favourable for transporter-traders such as the Lambadas.

The new market practices paved the way for the emergence of new trading communities that curbed the small-scale traders even further. As the Treaty opened free trade between British India and Hyderabad, many established traders from British India trained their sights on the state.[139] Muslims, Parsis, Jains, Gujarati *Baniyas* and *Marwadis* migrated to the state from western and northern India and gained control over its urban trade. The Marwadis and Jain *Vanis* (even spread their market networks to the village level. By the end of the nineteenth century, the rural trade of each region of the state became gradually dominated by trading communities,

136 APSA, NRAD, Inst. 13, List. 1, S. no. 327, File no. R4/c3/1895, 9.

137 Ibid., S. no. 167, File no. R4/d21/1886, 2–3.

138 *Report on the Administration of His Highness the Nizam's Dominions for the year 1294 F* (1884–1895) (Bombay: The Times of India Press, 1886), 246.

139 In the coastal districts of Madras Presidency, trade was largely organised and controlled by European and native businessmen. They maintained a number of agents and sub-agents in different towns to settle their transactions with the local merchants and to store their goods in warehouses till a purchaser was found. Trade was monopolised by a few merchants, especially in the ceded districts. These agents emerged eventually as independent traders and expanded their activities into Hyderabad. See Rao, *Economic History*, 40.

notably the Jain Vanis in the Marathwada region, the Lingayat Vanis in Karnataka, and the Komatis in Telangana.[140]

Some local peasant castes also started getting involved in trade activities; especially the richer strata that was already involved in money lending and other forms of exploitation of the subaltern peasantry. They gradually established themselves as merchants and traders. A recent study of the Warangal Subha reveals how this phenomenon emerged with the new market practices. The Komatis, who were in many cases rich landlords as well as village traders in Telangana, moved into wholesale trade, brokering and godown ownership. The list of prominent cotton dealers in Warangal included Siddamsetty Lingaya Besa, who was a Komati, Pingali Venkat Janardhan Reddy and Pingali Pratap Reddy. All of them were from landowning communities, and the last-named was a powerful *deshmukh* (landlord) in Warangal taluka. The growth of new markets thus strengthened the hands of such landed communities. Although still subordinated to the British cotton dealers, their power grew with the introduction of the railways.[141]

Hence, from the beginning of the nineteenth century, the new regulated market and colonial economy destroyed the long-established market relations in the state. It undermined the Lambadas' trade network and their monopoly over the food grain trade. The new market forces made trading increasingly difficult and soon the Lambadas were marginalised. To add to their woes, they were also badly affected by the severe trade depression of the period between about 1825 to 1845 that was caused to a large extent by the extortionate land taxes imposed by the British.[142] They were then marginalized even further by the introduction of the railways. The Lambadas' oral literature suggests that this period was one of the most distressful in their history. We shall discuss this at length in Chapter 6.

140 *Imperial Gazetteer of India Provincial Series. Hyderabad State* (hereafter Imperial Gazetteer Hyderabad) (Calcutta: Superintendent of Government Printing, 1909), 43; also see Raj, *Mediaevalism to Modernism*, 130–31.

141 V. Ramakrishna Reddy, *Economic History of Hyderabad State* (Delhi: Gian Publishing House, 1987), 548.

142 Bayly, *Rulers, Townsmen*, 263–302.

IMPACT OF TECHNOLOGY ON THE CARAVANS

The introduction of the railways brought about multiple changes in colonial India. They played an important role in furthering the development of the regulated market and the market economy in Hyderabad State. The railways connected the state with the colonial and world economy better. It also furthered the exploitation of the subaltern peasants by unscrupulous traders, moneylenders and landlords, as they had an added incentive to procure goods at cheap prices to sell in the wider markets of which they had a better knowledge. The railway economy, in short, established a regulated large-scale trade in the state that was almost entirely out of the control of the Lambadas.

The railways were introduced in British India in 1853. After a great deal of bargaining, it was decided to give a tender to the Nizam's Guaranteed State Railways Company Limited to construct railway lines in the state in 1870.[143] The British India Government was, in fact, keener than the Nizam to extend the railway line to Hyderabad. The Governor General of India wrote a congratulatory letter to the Nizam on the day of the inaugural celebration (8 October 1874) when the first railway line between Wadi and Secunderabad was opened. Reflecting the true British motives, the letter clearly implies that rather than public welfare and safety, the main aim was to extract cotton produce and the forest resources of the state. The Governor General also expressed a hope that the railways would improve communication between the three Presidencies of Bombay, Hyderabad and Madras and yield a great financial profit.[144] This railway line, the length of which was 121 miles, connected Hyderabad with the Great Indian Peninsular Railway (GIP) (Bombay to Madras). The immediate outcome was that the focus of the state's trade shifted from Madras to Bombay Presidency. A second line was laid in 1886 between Hyderabad and Bezawada, via Warangal,

143 Ray gives a fascinating account of the financial difficulties involved in the construction of a railway line in the State and how the British Indian Government was desperate to introduce railways in Hyderabad and their economic calculations. She argues that the Indian railways were above all promoted by merchants of Manchester. See her *Hyderabad and British*, 132–163.

144 APSA, Railways, Inst. 36, List. 6, S. no. 4, File no. Q6/a23/1874, 26.

with an extension from Dornakal via Singareni to the Godavari river opposite Bhadrachalam, which was called the Hyderabad Godavari Valley (HGV) Railway. This wasaimed at extracting the forest and mineral resources of Hyderabad's forest tracts. Further lines followed in subsequent years connecting much of the state, namely Kazipet-Balharshah (1924), Karepalli-Bhadrachalam Road (1927), Vikarabad-Bidar (1930), Secunderabad-Manmad (1899), Purna-Hingoli (1912), Secunderabad-Dronachalam (1916), and Parbhani-Purli (1929). By the end of 1930, Hyderabad State had acquired 1,328 miles of railway line.[145]

The railways further widened their network in the interior areas through the construction of feeder-roads. The feeder-roads connected the main centres of commerce and trade, sometimes even the smaller towns, to the railway economy. When the GIP railway extended beyond Sholapur in the direction of Gulbarga and Raichur, thirteen feeder-roads were laid covering a total length of 382 miles. Seven more feeder-roads were constructed between the Secunderabad and Wadi railway line, totalling ninety-seven-and-a-half miles. The Secunderabad to Warangal to Dornakal line was connected with thirteen new roads to serve as feeders. Subsequently, at the request of the railway company, fifteen roads, with a total length of 109 miles, were constructed as feeders to the HGV railway.[146]

As a whole, the road system in the state was greatly improved after 1891. Prior to 1868, there were, besides local roads, only a few trunk roads leading from Hyderabad to Sholapur, Gulbarga, Kurnool, Masulipatam, Hanamkonda and Nagpur, some of which were originally constructed by the British military authorities to facilitate the movement of troops.[147] But gradually, from the last quarter of the nineteenth century, the necessity of building road and transportation infrastructure to promote trade was realised and a number of roads were laid connecting almost all the trading centres in the state.[148] The prevalence of recurrent famine and drought also

145 *Statistical Abstract of H.E.H. the Nizam's Dominion, from 1331–1340 F* (1921–30) (Hyderabad-Dn.: Government Central Press, 1938), 388.

146 *Imperial Gazetteer Hyderabad*, 46.

147 Ibid., 45.

148 Raj, *Mediaevalism to Modernism*, 164.

prompted massive construction of roads in the state as a part of the relief measures. In 1877, the Viceroy ruled that the Public Works Department should hereafter be the chief agency for famine relief.[149] During the 1877–78 and 1899–1900 famines, a number of roads were either repaired or newly constructed.[150] In 1891, the Public Works Department maintained 1,241 miles of road, and this figure rose to 5,160 miles by 1937, of which 3,000 miles were metalled, enabling fast and heavy traffic, while the rest were un-metalled. The area of the state was 82,598 sq. miles, and the total road mileage worked out to one mile for every sixteen square miles of the territory. The state planned another 5,000 miles or one mile for every eight square miles. Many roads crossed rivers and streams.[151] A number of bridges were constructed on the Bheema, Krishna, Manjira, Godavari and Penganga rivers to reduce the traffic.[152] This project received greater attention from the early twentieth century onwards, and many bridges were built across the rivers.[153] However, the area covered by roads still remained insufficient in the state. The development of roads facilitated the influx of organised traders into the interior parts of the state both to collect agricultural produce and sell imported goods.

By the early twentieth century, most of the main towns where the traders based their trading activities were connected by road.[154]

149 Vaikuntham, *State, Economy and Social Transformation*, 142.

150 *Imperial Gazetteer Hyderabad*, 46.

151 Ibid.; also see Vaikuntham, *State, Economy and Social Transformation*, 142.

152 The main bridges constructed were Godavari bridge at Shahgadh (Aurangabad), Nanded (Nanded), Soan (Nirmal), Manjira bridge at Sangareddy (Medak), Nizamsagar (Nizamabad), Manjira causeway at Salorah (Nizamabad), Sangam (Bidar), Latur (Osmanabad), Kadium bridge at Asifabad (Adilabad), Bheema and Benthora bridges in Gulbarga, Dunda bridge in Aurangabad, Musi bridge in Nalgonda, Naranja bridge in Bidar, Maner bridge in Nanded, Kangna bridge in Gulbarga, Kistna Bridge in Raichur, Bensura and Sindhphana bridges in Bhir, Munneru bridge in Warangal, and Karammat-e-Usmani bridge in Karimnagar. See Vaikuntham, *State, Economy and Social Transformation*, 144.

153 Ibid., 142–44.

154 At the beginning of the twentieth century there were a large number of principal roads in the State: Hyderabad–Nagpur road (195 miles) which was partly bridged and well maintained ran due north, leaving the State at Pullara in Adilabad; the Hyderabad–Jalna road was 265 miles long and proceeded via Bidar, Udgir, and Gangkher; Hyderabad–Kurnool road, 136 miles, was passable for all seasons, a branch road from Jedcherla proceeded by Makhtal to the Kistna Station on the GIP railway; Hyderabad–Bellary road, 158 miles, ran through a large part of the Karnatic area; Hyderabad–Masulipatam, partly bridged and passable at all seasons, had a length of 116 miles in the State; from the sixtieth mile of this road, the old Madras road branches off. A road 91 miles long connected Hyderabad city with Warangal, and proceeded thence to Mangampet on the Godavari, 72 miles; other principal roads were Hyderabad to Medak (54 miles), Aurangabad to Nandgaon (54 miles) Aurangabad to Jalna (39 miles), Aurangabad to Toka (25 miles), Aurangabad to Bhir (72 miles), Naldrug to Gulbarga (32 ½ miles), Gulbarga to Srapur (60 miles), Raichur to Lingsugur (55 miles), Bhongiri to Nalgonda (40 miles) and Homnabad to Gulbarga railway station (36 miles). See *Imperial Gazetteer Hyderabad*, 46; Said Mahdi Ali also reported that there was a fairly good road system in the country by the last quarter of the nineteenth century, see his *Report on the History of Famine in H.H. the Nizam's Dominions in 1876–78* (Bombay: The Exchange Press, 1879), 41.

In the beginning, the traders would settle in small towns and big villages, and then gradually expand their trade deep into the forest areas where the adivasis lived. It is illuminating to examine how the railway economy brought an expansion of trade in Adilabad, one of the densely populated adivasi districts. The Kazipet–Ballarsha railway line, which passed through the district, and the subsequent building of roads, brought enormous changes in the hill tracts.[155] The development of communication networks between Mancherial and Rajura on the eastern side of the district, and between Nirmal and Adilabad on the western side, gave enough scope for traders to infiltrate into the district, both from the south and from the north.[156] At first, they settled in small towns like Luxatipet, Asifabad, Mancherial, Rajura Nirmal, Bela, Mahur, and also in Adilabad town, the district headquarters.[157] From there they expanded their trade activities, covering a large area by bullock carts.[158]

155 *Statistical Abstract of H.E.H.the Nizam's Dominions from 1351F to 1355 F (1941–45)* (Hyderabad-Dn.: Government Central Press, 1946), 337.

156 C. Von Fürer-Haimendorf, *Tribal Hyderabad, Four Reports* (Hyderabad: The Revenue Department, Government of H.E.H. the Nizam, 1945), 69.

157 P. Setumadhava Rao, *Among the Gonds of Adilabad* (Bombay: Popular Book Depot, 1949), 108.

158 Haimendorf, *Tribal Hyderabad*, 152.

The establishment of roads and railways thus changed market relations in the state. The railways offered an organised system of trade. To comprehend how the Lambadas were being marginalised it would be helpful to examine how the new trade networks operated. In Nizamabad District, for example, the HGV Railways covered eighty miles from the north-west to the south, with ten railway stations within the district. A number of feeder-roads and general roads were linked with these stations. The Komatis, who were the dominant traders in the district, imported cotton, silk and woollen cloth, salt, salted fish, opium, condiments, kerosene, oil, refined sugar and raw silk from Madras or Bombay via the railway stations. They took these goods on to the smaller towns and big villages, where they sold them at retail prices. The weekly fairs covered the villages that were not included in this network. When returning, the Komati's bullock carts would carry rice, gram, jawar, *bajara* (millet) and other food grains, cotton, oilseeds, chillies, jaggery, tamarind and tobacco—all extracted from this district.[159]

This network of dominant traders exploited the subaltern peasants ruthlessly. Money lending was instrumental in creating a perpetual bond between the traders and the subaltern peasants. Large quantities of agrarian produce were extracted from the poorer peasants at what were effectively very low prices and exported to the British territories. We shall discuss these practices in detail in chapter 5. Apart from the trading communities, many peasant castes were also involved in money lending.[160] The new land revenue system, which led to land being concentrated in the hands of non-cultivators and to the exploitation of the subaltern peasant, also paved the way for the emergence of the dominant trading community in the state.[161] The goods were usually carried to the nearest railway station by means of carts or pack-bullocks for export to Madras or Bombay.[162] The *Settlement Report of the Warangal Taluka* states that the entire agricultural produce of the villages of the district and the

159 *Imperial Gazetteer Hyderabad*, 127.

160 Furdoonji Jamshedji, *Notes on the Agriculturists of the District of Aurangabad, H.H. the Nizam's Dominions* (Bombay: Times of India Office, 1881), 79.

161 *Report of the Tenancy Committee Hyderabad-Deccan* (Hyderabad-Dn.: Government Central Press, 1940), 11.

162 Reddy, *Economic History*, 551.

adjoining districts was brought to the Warangal grain market by the rich peasants and businessmen. The Lingayats and the Baniyas (traditional traders) totally dominated the grain market as well as the uruses, jataras and fairs, which were refashioned as big trading centres.[163] The Lambadas were employed by the dominant traders to transport the procured grains to the local markets.[164] They soon lost even that job after pack-bullocks and bullock carts were replaced by motor vehicles in the state.[165]

The emergence of the dominant trading community thus not only established an organised large-scale trade in the state, it also diverted the trade, especially agricultural produce and salt, from the Lambada caravans to the fast-running railways. Table 1 reinforces this. Although there were some fluctuations, there was steady growth in the export and import values. The export quantity or value was always higher than the import value. This has been underlined in many recent studies.[166] These trends show how the introduction of railways and the new market regulations helped colonisers to extract resources from the state. The major export product of Hyderabad, constituting nearly 50 per cent of its total exports, was cotton. If Berar, which was the main cotton-producing tract, had not been transferred to the British, this would have been even higher. Oil seeds such as sesame, linseed, castor and groundnut also constituted a large share of the exports. Especially, with the opening of the HGV railway, cultivation of castor increased enormously in the Telangana districts; the region's dry weather also favoured the crop. The average export value of oil seeds during 1910–12 was Rs 326 lakhs as against Rs 179 lakhs during 1906–10. Grain exports, the next most important item of trade, increased enormously with the opening up of the central districts of the state by the HGV railway, being encouraged by the high prices prevailing in British India.[167]

163 *Settlement Report of the Warangal Taluqa of the Warangal District 1302F (1892–3)* (Hyderabad: The central Jail Press, 1894), 5.

164 *Settlement Report of Kulubgur and Boden Taluqas, H. H. the Nizam's Government 1298F (1888–89)* (Madras: The Lawrence Asylum Press, 1891), 27.

165 S. Kesava Iyengar, *Rural Economic Enquiries in the Hyderabad State 1949–51* (Hyderabad: Government Press, 1951), 326–36.

166 For instance see Raj, *Mediaevalism to Modernism*, 217; also Vaikuntham, *State Economy and Social Transformation*, 169.

167 Raj, *Mediaevalism to Modernism*, 225–27.

TABLE 1: Rail-borne trade from 1906–7 to 1930–31 in Hyderabad State

Years	Imports in tons	Exports in tons
Average from 1906–7 to1909–10	107,007	242,658
1910–11	128,942	305,132
1911–12	152,293	309,747
1912–13	121,492	187,835
1913–14	150,295	393,528
1914–15	117,325	282,981
1915–16	67,894	250,998
1916–17	105,537	692,461
1917–18	162,899	662,792
1918–19	243,136	591,237
1919–20	237,102	676,928
1920–21	307,548	632,807
1921–22	215,013	758,320
1922–23	207,822	702,996
1923–24	228,225	720,756
1924–25	193,112	799,512
1925–26	180,094	824,366
1926–27	195,154	741,436
1927–28	193,478	81,903
1928–29	234,645	901,740
1929–30	231,848	850,290
1930–31	242,131	817,347

Source: Based on the General Administration Reports of the concerned year cited in Vaikuntham, *State, Economy and Social Transformation*, 170.

The main item that was brought into the village markets of Hyderabad State through the railways was salt, on which the Lambadas had enjoyed a monopoly for a long period. After Hyderabad was connected with the GIP railways, a large quantity of salt was imported from Bombay and only smaller quantities came from Masulipatam, then in Madras Presidency, by the HGV railways. In fact, there was a tussle over the import of salt between the Madras and the Nizam governments, after which the Nizam government decided to import salt from Bombay. The Madras

government abolished the manufacturing of earth salt in order to establish its monopoly over the salt trade. An order was issued to the Nizam's government for the proposed prohibition of the export of earth salt from the Nizam's territory to the British territory in 1874. Although the Nizam's government banned such export, a small quantity continued to be exported to the frontier districts of Madras. This irritated the Madras government, which insisted that the Nizam's government execute a total ban. This was against the spirit of the treaty of 1802, which was meant to ensure a free flow of goods between the two territories. Salar Jung took up this issue with the British Indian government, but his plea was rejected. He then had to issue an order to the talukdars of the districts to prohibit the export of earth salt to British India.[168] This reveals how the Treaty of 1802 was not allowed to stand in the way of the furthering of the Nizam's interests. Although the Nizam's government adopted the policy of not importing salt from the Madras Presidency, the Lambadas continued to bring small quantities of salt from the coastal districts of Madras until the end of the nineteenth century. However, they could not compete with the rail-borne trade in salt and slowly gave it up. The Gazetteer of Vizagapatam District shows clearly how the number of Lambadas engaging in the salt trade declined progressively. The growth of infrastructure in terms of roads in the coastal districts of the Madras Presidency reduced their profit margins. When there were no roads in the region, they bought salt directly from the saltpan owners. But after the roads were laid, much of the salt was carried in carts by the big traders through the low country and sold to the Lambadas at places where the cart roads ended. After some time, the Lambadas also stopped going to these places as the trade no longer yielded any profit—the heavy competition and sinking opportunities in Hyderabad because of the rail-borne trade resulted in huge quantities of salt being dumped in Hyderabad from Bombay.[169]

Thus, from the beginning of the nineteenth century, the Lambadas' longstanding caravan trade began to crumble away. The setting up of a regulated market encouraged fraud and a number

168 Ibid., 229.

169 *Vizagapatam District Gazetteer*, repr. (Hyderabad: District Gazetteers Andhra Pradesh, 1994), I, 184.

of malpractices, and customs, transit and excise duties under the dhakala, rahdarri and *huqdari* (propertied) systems created greater and greater hardship for the Lambadas. It appears that the Lambadas, being an illiterate and subaltern community, could not grasp the logic of the new market developments and were unable to adapt their methods accordingly, unlike the literate and traditionally more powerful trading communities such as the Baniyas and Marwadis. The growth of infrastructure in terms of roads and railways brought profound structural changes to the market, and by the end of the nineteenth century the Lambadas had proved to be the losers. The majority were forced to settle down as cattle raisers, agriculturists, and agriculture labourers and a few resorted to dacoity during bad seasons.

We shall discuss these issues in the following chapters.

Their history as caravan traders had nonetheless given them their identity, weaving them into a coherent community.

2

Policing Cattle, Policing Nomads

Colonial Rationality and Cowherds

The second half of the nineteenth century was a crucial period in the history of the Lambada community. It was during this period that the colonial state forced the Lambadas to abandon their long-standing occupation as food grain traders and cattle-raisers, and to settle down as a subordinate peasantry. The process of settling the Lambadas as peasant subjects involved a range of tensions, as many continued with their nomadic lives as cattle raisers. The Lambadas, as we have seen in the preceding chapter, possessed huge herds of cattle when they lost the caravan trade and so they turned to cattle-trading and milk-vending. An ethnographic report of 1871 noted that they still possessed very large herds.[1] Even in 1905, Burton wrote in his *History of the Hyderabad Contingent* that 'the Banjaras, grain-carriers of nomadic habits, famous as the supplier of armies in the constant wars that continued uninterruptedly until final establishment of British power in southern India, still wander over the country with their numerous flocks and herds, pitching their tents where they can find fodder for their animals.'[2] Thus the Lambadas continued to move with their cattle for grazing and trading purposes, which was carried over into the twentieth century. This led the state to associate their

1 Balfour, *On the Ethnology of Hyderabad*, 11.

2 Burton, *A History of the Hyderabad Contingent*, 4.

nomadic life with their cattle. The Lambadas and their cattle soon became the main target of the state.

In fact, the policing of cattle and the nomadic people, particularly from the early nineteenth century, became a major concern of the colonial state, which had begun to map out and measure the Indian landscape, parcelling it as either the landed property of landlords and peasants, or as state property to be exploited for its timber or other resources. The colonial state believed that all land had to serve a useful and productive purpose. As a result, both agricultural and forest land were effectively enclosed. Nomadic communities such as the Lambadas, who wandered with their herds on and off such land, were placed on par with 'vagabonds', who ought to be disciplined. As Foucault says, the disciplinary state sought to create 'docile bodies', which involved the confining of individuals within enclosed spaces. Its aim was to establish presences and absences; to know where and how to locate individuals; to set up useful communications; to be able at each moment to supervise and, maybe, interfere with, the conduct of each individual to assess it and to judge it in order to calculate its qualities or merits. It is a procedure aimed at knowing, mastering and using subjects to the greatest extent.[3]

The colonial state used a similar strategy to confine the nomadic communities to agriculture. Indeed, the colonisers always had a fear of nomadic people, the fear that they acquired from their experience with vagabonds back in Britain. There, the vagrants and vagabonds had posed a serious threat to established order and property during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. There were many reasons for the emergence of vagabonds in Britain. One important reason was the creation of private property and the growth of a capitalist economy, which marginalised large sections of the population. The British state promulgated a series of Vagrancy Acts during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries to confine the vagabonds and paupers in enclosures so as to create 'docile bodies'. The vagabonds were blamed for sowing sedition, robberies, decay of husbandry, horrible crimes and offences and burglary. Many communities and classes were brought under the Vagrancy Acts, such as pedlars, tinkers, gypsies, the Irish, soldiers, mariners, entertainers, students,

3 Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*, trans. Alan Sheridan (London: Penguin, 1975), 141,143.

unlicensed healers and fortune-tellers. One important aspect of the Vagrancy Acts was that the offenders were arrested not because of their actions, but because their classification. The British ruling class sought in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries to enclose lands in Britain, and either eject people from the land, or demand that they work as paid farm labourers on landed property controlled either by the property-holding landlords or the yeoman farmers who rented land from them. In the process, the vagabonds and vagrants were marginalised.[4]

The colonisers thus were suspicious of nomadic people and used similar methods to settle nomadic communities in India. As we discussed in chapter 2, the caravan trade and imperial armies produced and nurtured a huge body of nomadic communities in India. From the early nineteenth century these communities were thrown into a desperate situation. On the one hand, they lost their employment with the army as the warfare had ended with the establishment of British power; and on the other, the new market forces began hindering their caravan trade. At this point, these communities began resorting to predatory activities. Many adivasi communities were also engaged in such activities in response to the colonial intervention in the forest tracts. Particularly in central and south India, the Lambadas, Bhils and Pindaris were marked out as the most turbulent communities.[5] A number of regulations and coercive methods were deployed by the colonial state to settle them in agriculture. In 1858, the Court of Directors in London writing to the Government of India on the successful suppression of Lambadas in the Berar region state that:

> We have learned with much satisfaction the beneficent effects of the operations of the Department which had resulted from bringing Berar and the Nagpore territory under British authority not only by rendering combined plans of operation possible...but also because the predatory classes in Berar had in a great degree renounced their predatory habits, and taken to tillage and other honest occupations.[6]

4 A. L. Beier, *Masterless Men: The Vagrancy Problem in England, 1560–1640* (London: Methuen & Co. Ltd., 1985), xxi, xxii, 9–10.

5 Burton, *A History of the Hyderabad Contingent*, 74–75.

6 Cited in Satya, 'Colonial Sedentarisation and Subjugation', 326.

The colonial state thus equated the Lambadas' nomadic lifestyle with predation and sought to confine them as peasant subjects. The wider process of settling these communities continued right into the twentieth century, and in some cases it was never fully carried through, as in the case of the Pathans of the North-Western Frontier Province. In the process the nomadic and adivasi communities were marginalised.[7]

The deployment of a colonial political rationality that aimed to systematise, stabilise and regularise power relations led ultimately to the loss of the Lambadas' cattle wealth and their confinement to settled agriculture. The colonial state promulgated and deployed a number of Acts and regulations to check the movements of Lambadas and their cattle. The new policies of governance on forests, cattle fodder, cattle census, cattle breeding, the creation of a regulated cattle market and cattle trespassing laws made it difficult for the Lambadas to thrive. These regulations were not only confined to British India but also extended to the princely states. In 1834, the British Resident at Hyderabad wrote to the Governor General of India that:

> The Nizam's Dominion is rapidly declining through the various stages of progressively increasing misgovernment into a state of anarchy. Such a state we could not consistently with our security and with our duty to our subjects, permit to subsist in so extensive a country surrounded on all sides by British territories.[8]

'Misgovernment', thus was hardly tolerated even in the princely states, and they were forced to espouse the colonial model. Prior to the import of colonial ideology and its establishment in Hyderabad, there was little state regulation of agricultural methods

7 Crispin Bates, 'Lost Innocents and the Loss of Innocence: Interpreting Adivasi Movements in South Asia', in *Indigenous People in Asia*, eds. R. H. Barnes, A. Gray and B. Kingsbury (Michigan: American Association for Asian Studies, 1995), 103–119; David Arnold, 'Rebellious Hillmen: the Gudem-Rampa Risings, 1839-1924', in *Subaltern Studies I*, ed. R. Guha (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1982), 88–142; Nandini Sunder, *Subalterns and Sovereigns: An Anthropological History of Bastar, 1854–1996* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1997); Caldwell Lipsett, *Lord Curzon in India, 1898–1903* (London: R. A. Everett & Co., 1903), see chapter 3, 'The Independent Tribes', 29–44; also see Mayaram, *Against History*, 152–188.

8 IOR, Board's Record, F. 4/1494, 1834–35, 58700: 79.

and practices. Under British pressure, the state began to intervene in this sphere in a small way from the early years of the nineteenth century, and more extensively from the middle of the century. It was this process that brought about the gradual dispossession of the Lambadas' cattle wealth.

Scholars have not paid much attention to the ways in which conflicts over cattle raising practices were articulated with power relations under colonial rule. Far more attention was paid by ecological anthropologists and environmental historians to the relationship between forest dwellers and their forests, and the colonial impact on their way of life. Nevertheless, much remains to be done in terms of tracing out the explicit nature of these relations and the configurations around which they derived meaning.[9] Laxman D. Satya's recent study on the ecology of the Berar region provides an exception to this rule, as he has examined practices of cattle breeding and the developments that undermined the cattle wealth of that region. He argues that the spread in the cultivation of cotton as well as other commercial crops in the region disrupted existing agricultural practices and arrangements. In particular, he outlines how the loss of pastures and grazing land led to a reduction in fodder and firewood, a deterioration in the quality of the soil and health of the cattle, and epidemics that wiped out large numbers of cattle throughout the region.[10] Satya does not examine the impact on particular groups. This chapter, therefore, aims to fill that gap and explore the following questions: how serious were the effects of colonial policies of political and economic rationalisation on the Lambada cattle-raisers? To what extent was this a process of what Foucault has defined as 'governmentalisation'? How did such processes eventually fracture the long-established local practices? How exactly did the new establishment dispossess the Lambadas of their cattle wealth? How did the cattle-raising practices mesh

9 Ramachandra Guha, *The Unquiet Wood: Ecological Change and Peasant Resistance in the Himalaya* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1989); Madhav Gadgil and Ramachandra Guha, eds., *This Fissured Land: an Ecological History of India*, (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1992); David Arnold and Ramachandra Guha, eds., *Nature, Culture, Imperialism: Essays on the Environmental History of South Asia* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1995).

10 Laxman D. Satya, *Ecology, Colonialism, and Cattle: Central India in the Nineteenth Century* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2004), 1–6.

with power relations in colonial India? Why did the colonial state target the Lambadas' cattle? How did the new establishment of the colonial state further the subalternisation of the Lambadas? While addressing these questions, we shall also explore the tension created by the effects of colonial state power.

THE LAMBADAS' PASSION FOR CATTLE

It is important here to discuss the Lambadas' passion for cattle in order to understand how cattle were an integral part of the Lambada culture and life; and also to understand the ways in which the Lambadas valued cattle. As we have seen in the preceding chapter, the Lambadas had a long association with cattle. When they were forced to lay down their long-standing food grain trade, they turned to cattle raising for trading and milk vending purposes. They moved into the forests with these herds in search of grazing pastures. They would stay at a place for as long as their cattle could graze, which was not for more than a year or two, after which the pasture would be exhausted.[11] Many of them settled down permanently in the districts where the forests were concentrated like Warangal, Bidar, Nalgonda, Mahbubnagar Adilabad and Nanded, moving within them constantly with their cattle.[12] The cattle-breeding practices of the Lambadas provided the best quality cattle for agriculturalists in the state. Their women folk were involved in milk and ghee selling. Even though many of them settled in agriculture by the end of the nineteenth century, they continued to practise cattle breeding. The practice was to allocate one member of the family for cattle raising, while the rest engaged in agriculture. Thus the Lambadas established themselves as the main cattle breeders in Hyderabad State.[13]

The Lambadas had a great passion for cattle. It is worth noting Balfour's description of their passion:

> One or more of their best bullocks are selected as leaders, their horns and the crests of their pack-saddles are ornamented with cowries, scarlet cloths, peacocks' feathers, tassels of cotton variously coloured, etc.; their necks are encircled with a band of scarlet cloth or leather, to which is fastened numerous bells of various sizes, and as they walk the bells give out a monotonous sound. The selected animal is supposed to be deified, forming the protector of the herd, and is termed Guru Bail.[14].

11 *Annual Progress Report of Forest Administration in His Highness the Nizam's Dominions for 1305F (7 October 1895 –6 October 1896)* (APSA, R–22) 16.

12 *Cattle Census Report of H.E.H. the Nizam's Dominions for the Year 1349F* (1939–1940) (Hyderabad: Government Central Press,1943) 11.

13 Ibid., 28.

Lambadas address themselves as *gohur* or *gormaati* (cattle herdsman), which also indicates their intimate association with cattle.[15] Their oral literature informs us that they shared every happy and lamentable moment with their cattle. A ritual among the Lambadas was to seat the newly-wed bride before her departure for her husband's house on a bullock called *Hashya*. Then the bride recounts to the bullock the pleasant memories she has so far had at her maternal home and the possible difficulties she may face at her spousal house.[16] In fact, women had a stronger attachment to the cattle as they were the ones mostly involved in cattle rearing and grazing. They played an active role along with their men in the caravan trade as well as in cattle-raising.[17]

There is a belief among the Lambadas that even after their death, women, as benign spirits, continue to protect their cattle. As the narration goes, there was one Dharavath Khamda who had seven daughters. These girls would take the cattle to the forest for grazing. One day, unfortunately, they are bitten there by a snake and die. It is believed that the seven daughters merged with the Lambadas' beloved goddess *Sathi Bhavani* (seven goddesses) and became deities for cattle protection. The Lambadas worshipped them in the month of July or August, when diseases were widespread in the region, by sacrificing a goat to them.[18] Lambada folklore abounds in such stories, which revolve around their association with cattle. They even claim their origin from Mota and Mola, two cattle herdsmen who were supposed to have worked with Lord Krishna, himself

14 Balfour, *The Cyclopaedia of India*, 271.

15 Balfour, *On the Ethnology of Hyderabad*, 11.

16 M. Gona Naik, *Sugali Samskriti-Bhasa Sahityam* (Telugu: Sugali Culture and Language Literature) (Hyderabad: Padma Sri Graphics, 2002), 158.

17 Balfour, *The Cyclopaedia of India*, 1969, 271.

18 Y. Ruplanaik, *Colourful Banjara (Lambani) Tribe Through the Ages* (Bangalore, 1998), 218.

a cowherd. Seva Bhaya, the nineteenth century Lambada social reformer and philosophical teacher of the community, was also a cowherd.[19] These legends reinforce the strong relationship between the Lambadas and their cattle. It was because of these ties, besides the fact that the cattle were their primary source of income, that they could not give up cattle raising even after losing their traditional occupation of transporting food grain. The state however perceived this relationship as a reason for their undesirable nomadic life, which was one of moving with their cattle for fodder, water, and marketing cattle and cattle products. This way of life did not accord with the new official agenda, and both the British and Hyderabad State adopted a number of methods to regulate and control cattle. Before we examine how the policing of nomadic cattle dispossessed the Lambadas of their livestock, we shall discuss how the state valued cattle. This will help us to understand why the cattle were a major concern of the state as well as to understand how the state's rationalisation agenda affected cattle raising.

CATTLE AS AN ECONOMIC RESOURCE

Cattle in south Asia were valued for a variety of reasons other than as a source of livelihood. The colonial state viewed cattle in narrowly commercial terms, as an economic resource. In the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, the colonial state valued cattle for backpack transportation as well as for tilling the land. It was only from the last quarter of the nineteenth century that the state seriously thought of improving cattle products such as milk and ghee in the colony.[20] To this end, the colonial state began documenting cattle through censuses, encouraging improved methods of breeding and conducting cattle shows. Let us see how these projects were deployed in Hyderabad State and how it turned against the interest of the Lambadas.

The Hyderabad State was home to one of the largest cattle populations in India. This was partly because of the presence of large numbers of long-established cattle raisers such as the Lambadas,

19 Hassan, *The Castes and Tribes*, I: 21.

20 *Report of the Royal Commission on Agriculture in India, June 1928* (London: His Majesty's Stationery Office, 1928), 169.

the Gonds and the Mathuras, who possessed big herds.[21] According to the census of 1911, there were 42,800 cattle breeders in the state (Lambadas and Gonds),[22] while in 1899, there had been 1,577,803 cattle.[23] Among all the districts, Warangal, Bidar, Nalgonda, Adilabad and Nanded had the highest concentration of cattle, with above one hundred heads of cattle per hundred people.[24] Nevertheless, these cattle were felt as a burden by the state due to the scarcity of grazing pastures and their trespassing. The Royal Agricultural Commission observed that there were sixty-seven cattle for every 213 acres in British India, whereas Hyderabad State possessed 146 cattle for every 213 acres. Colonial and state officials blamed this 'overstocking' of cattle on widespread vegetarian sentiments that deprecated the slaughter of any animal, as well as cow-worship that led to the maintenance of economically worthless animals.[25]

Influenced by the British India government's policies, the Nizam's government began to rationalise the cattle strength and cattle products in the state. They, too, started to count their cattle in censuses, encourage improved methods of breeding and sponsor cattle shows in the state from the last quarter of the nineteenth century. The important object of these projects was to provide the healthiest cattle for agricultural work and to discourage maintaining the worthless or poor quality ones.[26]

The Directory of Stud and Cattle was established in the state in 1877 with this purpose in mind.[27] Subsequently, the department also initiated a pilot study in 1890 to conduct a general survey of the cattle population in the state and to map out cattle strength and to take up scientific breeding in the state. The study came out with a mere morphological classification that divided the cattle in the

21 *Livestock Census 1349F* (1939–1940), 11.

22 *Census of India 1911, XIX, Hyderabad State* (Bombay: The Times Press, 1913), part I, 140.

23 A. G. Dunlop, *Report on the Famine Relief Operation in H. H. the Nizam's Dominions 1309 F (1899–1900)* (Madras: Lawrence Asylum Press, 1901), 24.

24 *Livestock Census 1349F* (1939–1940), 11.

25 *Livestock Census of H.E.H. the Nizam's Dominions 1344F* (1934–1935) (Hyderabad-Dn.: Government Central Press, 1936), 43.

26 *Cattle Census Report of H.E.H. the Nizam's Dominions for the Year 1329F* (1919–1920) (Hyderabad-Deccan: Government Central Press, 1924) 1.

27 APSA, NRAD, Inst. 37, List 3, S. no. 110, File no. R2/a18/1917, 23.

state into four categories on the basis of their physical features such as capacity to endure hardship, milk yield and longevity. According to this study, the cattle found in the vicinity of Hyderabad city were brown and red in colour, forty-two to forty-six inches in height and hardy but not high-yielding. In the Marathwada districts, the cattle were black and red in colour, heavier, forty-nine to fifty-two inches in height, with magnificent humps of nine to ten inches and short legs and very hardy. The cattle of the Karnataka districts were marked like the Mysore breed with long horns and sleek appearance, but were not hardy. The cattle of the Telangana districts were categorised as less hardy, white in colour and sleek in appearance. The Lambada cattle were equated with the Telangana types as they were mostly white in colour. [28] However, this data was considered insufficient and the survey could not serve the agenda of the state.

The Nizam's government then launched a cattle census in1916 on the lines of British India. The intention of the state with regard to the project was clearly reflected in the official correspondence. The Director of Statistics wrote to his subordinates that 'without the census and a general survey of the cattle, it will not be possible to gauge the economic resources of the cattle nor to organise the breeding operation started by His Exalted Highness' Government, and that a cattle census is indissolubly bound up with a cattle survey.'[29] The first thorough cattle census in the state was conducted in 1916 and thereafter every five years. These reports provided the government with various data: the total strength of cattle in the state, geographical spread and density, number of working and nomadic cattle and their masters' land position, their possession per *pattadar* (occupant) and numbers per hundred acres of occupied land.[30] They also provided the number of cattle grazing in forests, waste and fallow land, cattle revenue from grazing tax and export and import duties, traditional occupation of the possessor, and the list of places where cattle shows were being conducted.[31] These

28 APSA, NRAD, Inst. 37, List 3, S. no.16, File no. R2/c1/1890, 5, 31–33.

29 APSA, NRAD, Inst. 41, List 16, S. no. 285, File no. B2/c1/1917, 14.

30 *Cattle Census Report 1329F* (1919–1920), 2; *Livestock Census 1344F* (1934–1935), 18.

31 Ibid., 44, 46, 86.

data helped the state to check and monitor the nomadic cattle's movement, as well as to modernise cattle breeding.

The setting up of breeding farms was regarded as an important means of providing the best quality cattle for agriculture. In fact, many reports extolled the fact that the project aimed at providing good quality cattle to peasants and for army transportation, which could compete in the all-India market. Cattle breeding had started in the state from 1891.[32] Himayatsagar, in the east of Hyderabad city, was chosen for this purpose. In the subsequent years, similar farms were set up at Rapempett in Medak district and at Hingoly.[33] Krishna valley and Malvi breeds, which were marked by the British Indian Government as the best quality, were taken up for breeding.[34] The scientific breeding of cattle was given an industrial status. The Nizam government's collaboration with the Madras government further enhanced the worth of the project. The latter established cattle-breeding industries in various places in Mysore from 1882 onwards. Its cattle depot at Hunsure (near Bangalore) provided good quality cattle for breeding purposes to the Nizam.[35] The Madras government also provided the Nizam's government with specialised veterinary doctors and other infrastructure required for breeding. However, this project was an utter failure and could not serve the needy peasants.[36]

At the end of 1939, there were only fifty-six breeding bulls in the state and they were kept in the districts; the number was quite insufficient to register any kind of success. For example, the fifteen bulls kept in the Nizam Sagar Development area serviced only 140 cows in that year. Only a small number of people those who were located close to the stud farms could avail themselves of this facility. But during famines and periods of dearth, even they would leave for the forests to graze their cattle. In fact, these stud farms

32 APSA, NRAD, Inst. 37, List 3, S. no.16, File no. R2/c1/1890, 5

33 *Annual Report on the Stud and Veterinary Department of H.E.H. the Nizam's Government for the Year 1326F (1916–1917)* (Hyderabad-Dn.: Government Central Press, 1918), 11.

34 *Cattle Census Report 1329F* (1919–1920), 15.

35 *Manual of the Administration of the Madras Presidency*, 247.

36 *Annual Report on the Stud and Veterinary Department of H.E.H. the Nizam's Government for the Year 1328F* (1918–1919) (Hyderabad-Dn.: Government Central Press, 1920), 1.

suffered from want of basic infrastructure facilities like medicine, water and grass.[37] Also there was a lenient attitude towards cattle and cattle breeding owing to the poor response from the peasants. It was said in the Veterinary Report of 1917 that 'the posting of stud bulls with *ryots* (peasants) has not been found successful, and that it is proposed to maintain bull stallion stands at local board expense in future.'[38] In 1916, the government decided to stop purchasing stud bulls due to the lack of response from the peasants. However the project continued, focusing only on horse breeding. Also as a horse was seen as a legitimate symbol of state power, pride of place was given to horse breeding right from the beginning.[39] In 1871, the Nizam's government concluded an agreement with Arthur Henry Powell, a gentleman from Maldourna, Australia, to lease a thousand acres of land at Domagudam *rumnah* (grazing pasture), forty miles from Hyderabad city on the Gulbarga railway line, for horse-breeding purpose. In return, Powel agreed to supply four hundred good quality horses to the government. This project furthered only the horse-breeding agenda of the state.[40]

The peasants had their own traditions of breeding cattle. For example, in Lambada society, the practice was to dedicate the best bull calf in the name of the deceased of a family or in the name of the deity. After the ceremony, the animal would be named *Brahmani* bull and set free in the village with free access to fields and crops, and would then be used for breeding purposes.[41] We may argue that this practice was just as 'scientific' and much more practical than the state-sponsored projects. The state however stigmatised Lambada breeding methods as 'unscientific' and to be forcibly suppressed. Ali Abdoola, Director of the Stud and Veterinary Department, who fully subscribed to the colonial ideology, had a negative opinion of the

37 *Annual Administration Report of Civil Veterinary Department H.E.H. the Nizam's Government for the Year 1348F* (1938–1939) (Hyderabad-Dn.: Government Central Press, 1940), 11; APSA, NRAD, Inst. 13, List 1, S. no. 218, File no. R2/b10/1889, 4.

38 *Annual Report on the Stud and Veterinary Department of H.E.H. the Nizam's Government for the Year 1327F (1917–1918)* (Hyderabad-Dn.: Government Central Press, 1919), 1.

39 *Annual Report on the Stud and Veterinary 1326F* (1916–1917), 4.

40 APSA, NRAD, Inst. 13, List 1, S. no. 11, File no. R2/b12/1871, 11–20.

41 *Livestock Census 1344F* (1934–1935), 15.

Lambadas' stud bulls. It is reported that he had ordered gelding of a lot of the breeding bulls owned by the Lambadas, for their inferior quality, which was polluting high quality cattle breeds in the state.[42] This project also disturbed the Lambadas' cattle trade relation with the state. They were the sole cattle suppliers to the state army for dairy and meat. But, after the breeding project was inaugurated, they lost their long-standing trading bonds with the state, as the state started importing good quality cattle into Hyderabad State from Madras for both meat and milk. In 1892, the army imported 135 bullocks for meat from the Madras government.[43]

A method that the state adopted to induce peasants to take an interest in raising healthier cattle was to conduct and encourage cattle shows. These were conducted by the state throughout the year at the main trading centres and jataras, mobilising cattle from across the country.[44] Whenever a show was scheduled in any of the states or provinces, it was the practice to inform all the states and draw cattle from across the country. The cattle shows facilitated the breeding industries to pick up good quality cattle and acquire knowledge of cattle of different regions.[45] Shows were conducted with government and local funds, and cash prizes were awarded for the best quality cattle: Malegaon and Nanded (Nanded district), Jalna, Vijapur and Aurangabad (Aurangabad), Hingoliounda (Parbhani) Huzurnagar and Devarakonda (Nalgonda), Kurravi (Warangal), Kalabgur and Patancharu (Medak) and Manvi (Raichur) were some of the important places in the state where countrywide shows were held regularly.[46] The state-sponsored cattle shows gave a different connotation to the hitherto informal cattle shows. Regions and communities supposed to produce inferior varieties were stigmatised permanently in this process. Traditionally, peasants used to conduct cattle shows just for pleasure during the religious

42 APSA, NRAD, Inst. 37, List 3, S. no. 110, File no. R2/a18/1917, 23.

43 APSA, Military, Inst. 11, List 2, S. no. 89, File no. K1/d13/1892, 16.

44 *Annual Report on the Stud and Veterinary 1327F* (1917–1918), 18.

45 APSA, NRAD, Inst. 37, List 3, S. no. 77, File no. R2/c27/1911, 5.

46 *Annual Report on the Stud and Veterinary Department 1327F* (1917–1918), 18; *Annual Report on the Stud and Veterinary Department of H.E.H. the Nizam's Government for the year 1346F* (1936–1937) (Hyderabad-Dn.: Government Central Press, 1938), 40.

jataras.[47] The Lambadas used to actively participate in these jataras held at places such as Rampur and Hemalwada (Karimnagar) and Kurravi (Warangal), to which they used to bring four hundred to five hundred cattle.[48]

The state-sponsored cattle shows were not much of a success. They suffered seriously from recurrent famines that not only killed large numbers of cattle, but were often followed by epidemics of cattle disease. Whenever an epidemic broke out, shows were strictly banned by the state as a measure to check the contagion. In 1918, only six shows were conducted owing to the prevailing famine prevalent that year.[49] The response from the peasants was also poor, which was partly because of their fear of epidemics. On the other hand, shows also suffered from a shortage of funds. The government had to look for patrons. In 1913, the Director of the Studs and Veterinary Department wrote to ministers in the Nizam government to become patrons of the Gulbarga and Adilabad cattle shows.[50]

These various state-sponsored cattle improvement projects did not help the large majority of peasants in any way, and they also affected the long-established cattle raisers adversely. Particularly the Lambadas' cattle were marked as of inferior quality, and as a result the demand for their cattle fell. The Revenue Secretary of the state, in his speech at the All-India Economic Conference held at Hyderabad in 1937, remarked that the Lambada and Gond cattle-breeding practices were conventional and that they raised only indigenous types.[51] This propaganda was more widespread in British India, particularly in the Madras Presidency.[52] In fact, as we shall see shortly, there were clear directions to forest and revenue departments to discourage nomadic or inferior cattle. This might have been strategically done to arrest the nomadic lives of Lambadas and their cattle and to persuade them to settle in agriculture. Both

47 APSA, NRAD, Inst. 37, List 3, S. no. 76, File no. R2/c28/1913, 2–3.

48 W. V. Grigson, *The challenge of Backwardness* (Hyderabad-Dn.: Government Press, 1947), 57

49 *Annual Report on the Stud and Veterinary 1328F* (1918–1919), 3.

50 APSA, NRAD, Inst. 37, List 3, S. no. 76, File no. R2/c28/1913, 3.

51 *Some Economic Facts and Figures of H.E.H. the Nizam's Dominions* (Hyderabad-Dn.: Government Central Press, 1937), 9.

52 *Vizagapatam District Gazetteer*, I: 21

the Nizam and the British Indian government considered their cattle movement to be a serious problem for law and order. A number of cases of this nature were reported before the Hyderabad Resident for settlement.[53] As a result of the state's suspicion, the Lambadas lost the forest and revenue officials' sympathy and were subjected to serious punishments whenever they moved with their cattle for grazing and marketing. We shall now examine how the state policing of nomadic cattle dispossessed the Lambadas of their cattle wealth.

POLICING CATTLE

The policing of cattle was a new strategy introduced by the colonial state. It is not to say that cattle were never policed by any state in India in the past. In colonial India, cattle were policed under a number of regulations, through the 'notion of trespass', and market and forest regulations. These regulations were fundamental to the new rational governance of cattle movement, cattle markets and cattle grazing. Together, they led to a gradual whittling away of the cattle wealth of the Lambadas.

The Notion of Trespass

The notion of trespass first appeared in India with the promulgation of the Cattle Trespass Regulation of 1816 of Madras Presidency. It was the first of its kind. Subsequently, each province promulgated its own regulation on cattle trespass. To encompass all these Acts, a comprehensive special Act called the Cattle Trespass Act was promulgated in 1857 and extended to the whole of British India, also applicable in areas leased to the British (Residency, military and railway properties) in Hyderabad State. It is worth noting the preamble of the Act that says:

> Loss and injury are suffered by cultivators and occupiers of land from damages done to crops and other produce of land by the trespass of cattle, and that damage is done to the sides and slopes of public roads and embankments by cattle trespassing thereon, and that it is expedient to authorise the seizure and detention of cattle doing damage aforesaid, and also to make provision for the disposal of

53 APSA, NJD (misc.), Inst. 9, List 2, S. no. 732, File no. L6/a198/1912, 12.

> cattle found straying in any public place, and it makes provision for such cases.[54]

Although Hyderabad State did not pass a separate Act at the time, the Cattle Trespass Act was implemented in spirit through the Local Board Department, which was reorganised in 1887 on the British Indian model. The Board invested village *patwaris* (accountant) and police *patels* (in-charge of police duties) with full power to set up cattle-pounds in the villages and monitor nomadic cattle.[55] In 1305 F (1895–94), The Board of Revenue of the state issued a strongly-worded circular to the Forest and Revenue Department stating that 'Dhangars (shepherds) and Lambadas should be closely watched and controlled by local officials.'[56] Later on, a separate clause, targeting nomadic cattle, was inserted in the Hyderabad Forest Act of 1899 on cattle trespass regulation in forest lands.[57] On the lines of the 1857 Act, finally, the Hyderabad State promulgated a separate Act called the Cattle Trespass Act of 1337 F (1927–28) in order to further the policing of cattle.[58]

These mechanisms affected the Lambadas in particular as they were at that time moving with their cattle constantly between the territories of Hyderabad State and British India. Each Lambada cattle raiser had about fifty to a hundred cattle. Larger herds had up to 500 cattle. Unlike plough-cattle, these cattle were constantly driven from one place to another in search of grazing pastures and water, especially during the hot seasons and famines when there was scarcity of fodder. As a result, the cowherds would leave their families at home and graze their cattle for months in the Upper

54 A series of regulations passed by local governments; Regulation XI. 1816 of Madras Code, Regulation XII. 1827 of Bombay Code, Regulation V. 1830 of the Bengal Code. The Cattle Trespass Act III of 1857 of the Government of India, subsequently amended in 1860,1861,1871, 1883,1891,1910,1914,1921 and 1924, see N. K. Bhattacharyya, *The Cattle Trespass Act, as Amended to 1932* (Calcutta: Eastern Law House, 1932), 2.

55 *Imperial Gazetteer Hyderabad*, 64.

56 *Annual Progress report of Forest Administration 1305F (1895–96)*, 4.

57 *Imperial Gazetteer Hyderabad*, 37.

58 *Report on the Administration of His Highness the Nizam's dominions for the Year 1337F (1927–1928)* (Hyderabad-Deccan: Government Central Press, 1931), 17.

Amrabad Plateau and the wooded hills between Palampet and Paloncha in Warangal. Sometimes they would stay there even during the rainy seasons.[59] Haimendorf writes about their lives:

> I have seen Mathuras (another cowherd community) camping in the middle of the rains with no other shelter than some rough blankets raised tent-like on poles, quite insufficient to provide adequate protection, and on stormy nights men and provisions get thoroughly soaked. Banjaras (Lambadas) usually erect rough leaf-huts, but these are equally ineffective against heavy rain. A pastoral people without proper tents seems an incongruity, and I am almost inclined to assume that this deficiency is due to a degeneration of culture and a decay of material equipment preceding a change in mode of life.[60]

This state of affairs could not be, as he says, due to cultural decay as the Lambadas never had the culture of living in tents like the Native Americans and Mongolians. But it reflects the hardships the Lambadas faced when there was inclement weather. They usually lived on open land and would erect rough leaf-huts or take shelter in local adivasi houses. Their constant movement often caused damage to standing crops.[61] However, the peasants largely tolerated this trespass and there were traditional ways of dealing with this problem. The custom was for the Lambadas to compensate for the damage by manuring the fields, or offering cattle products (milk and ghee) or even cattle if the damage was great.[62] In this way, pastoral people and the settled peasants coexisted through myriad structures of interdependence between grazing and agriculture; the peasants largely depended on the pastoralists for their plough-cattle and for manuring the fields, whereas the pastoral community needed the peasants' cooperation to graze cattle on or pass through their land.

59 C. Von Fürer-Haimendorf, 'Tribal Population of Hyderabad', in *Census of India 1941, Vol. XXII, H.E.H. the Nizam's Dominions (Hyderabad State)* (Hyderabad: Government Central Press, 1945), part I, XLIX.

60 Ibid., L.

61 Ibid., XLVIII.

62 Sunder shows how adivasis of Bastar and cattle-breeding Lambadas had harmonious and reciprocal relations in their dealings both in trade and grazing in pre-colonial and early colonial India; see her *Subalterns and Sovereigns*, p. 11; similar trends also recounted by Satya in his *Ecology, Colonialism, and Cattle*, 84.

Sometimes the peasants provided them with food and shelter in return for manuring their field.[63]

Nevertheless, these traditional customs were subverted once the notion of trespass was introduced rigorously by the state from the 1860s. Cattle-pounds were established in every village, which were supervised by the village patwari and the police patel, and where there was no patwari or police patel, the village head acted as the ex-officio incharge. The cultivator or occupier of any land could seize any cattle trespassing on his land and send them to the cattle-pound established for that particular village. The pound-keeper had to register the details of the cattle and make a public announcement for their recovery. The owner had to pay a fine of two annas for each head of cattle; it was four annas in British India. If no one turned up, the cattle would be auctioned publicly after seven days from the day of their impounding, and the amount would be deposited with the district magistrate.[64]

One important aspect in the notion of trespass was that if the owner habitually or deliberately permitted his cattle to stray or graze in the fields, it would be considered to be theft. The accused would be punished under the criminal law besides being fined. But it was difficult to decide whether the act of grazing or straying was accidental or deliberate. Revenue officials pointed out this problem when the Cattle Trespass Act of 1337 F (1927–28) came up for amendment in 1941.[65] Because of their reputation for 'criminality,' Lambadas whose cattle strayed or grazed illegally were generally charged under the criminal law, with a case against them being filed at the *thana* (police station). In 1895, Soma Naik of Bandegad village of Deodrug taluka in Raichur, who owned a herd of 272 cattle, was accused of grazing cattle in the pasture of the patwari of

63 Neeladri Bhattacharya shows how strong this network of interdependence was between pastoral people and settled peasants in early nineteenth-century Punjab. See his 'Pastoralists in a Colonial World', in *Nature, Culture, Imperialism: Essays on the Environmental History of South Asia*, eds. David Arnold and Ramachandra Guha (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1995), 61.

64 APSA, NHD, Cattle Trespass Act, File no. 30/30/1351F (1941–42), f. 10–12; also see *The Andhra Pradesh Code, Acts and Regulations in Force in the Telangana Area of the State of Andhra Pradesh from 1305F to 1359F*, 5 vols. (Hyderabad), III: 493–4.

65 APSA, NHD, File no. 30/30/1351F (1941–42), 117, 119.

Deodrug while he was driving his cattle to the Jalhalli fair. He was caught by the patwari when he was returning from the fair, and a case was filed against him at the Deodrug thana.[66] There were many such cases in which the Lambadas were charged for illegal grazing, particularly by the forest officials.[67] Illegal grazing in forest areas was generally considered theft. This allowed the Nizam's forest officials and contractors to control and exploit the Lambadas in the name of implementing the Cattle Trespass Act. Even when the cattle grazed in the wastelands, they would seize the cattle, alleging that the area was under their control, and impound them. Once the cattle were impounded it was very difficult to get them released. The contractors would collect one rupee for each cattle and issue a receipt for two annas, which was the official fine. There were cases where the cattle owner would not claim his cattle, fearing heavy harassment by the contractors.[68]

We shall discuss this in detail in the following paragraphs.

In 1890, the Cattle Trespass Act of 1871 was amended by the British Indian Government, and owners of cattle found damaging public roads, railway tracks, canals and embankments were subjected to severe punishment and heavy fines.[69] Those Lambadas operating beyond Hyderabad State for trading and grazing purposes were severely persecuted under this Act. The railway properties in the state were also covered by this Act. It was difficult for the Lambadas to avoid crossing the fenced railway areas, as more and more railway lines were laid across the state in the final decades of the nineteenth century and in the early twentieth century. They had a serious problem with the railway chowkidars.[70] The cattle that crossed or grazed in the cantonment grazing pastures would also be impounded under the Act. The Secunderabad and Aurangabad military cantonments maintained large herds of cattle for dairy and slaughter, and horses for transporting purposes. The army took a

66 APSA, NJD, Inst. 14, List 1, S. no. 204, File no. H13/b12/1895, 5–8.

67 APSA, NFD, Inst. 38, List 2, S. no. 525, File no. G2/d7/1935, 16.

68 *Annual Progress Report of Forest Administration in His Highness the Nizam's Dominions for the year 1308F* (1898–99) (Hyderabad-Dn: A. Venoogopal Pillai & Sons, Printers to H.H. the Nizam's Government, 1900), 17, 18; APSA, NFD, Inst. 38, List 2, S. no. 525, File no. G2/d787/1938, 15.

69 Bhattacharyya, *The Cattle Trespass Act*, 28.

70 APSA, NJD, Inst. 36, List 1, S. no 33, File no. H10/e23/1915, 5–9.

huge area around the two cities on lease for grazing purposes. If any private cattle strayed into their leased area, they would immediately be impounded. The Lambadas of Charlapally had many bitter experiences with the Secunderabad cantonment officials, who would generally impound the cattle and insist that the guilty be punished.[71]

The notion of trespass thus severely curtailed the movements of the Lambadas' cattle. It also fractured the locally built practices. The propertied would insist that the cattle be impounded when they strayed into their fields.[72]

Regulating Cattle Markets

Another way of policing cattle was through permits, known as rahdarri and *dhakala*. Carrying a rahdarri and a dhakala was mandatory when it came to the grain and other trades. It was extended to cattle in Hyderabad State only from the middle of the nineteenth century.[73] It became compulsory for the Lambadas to carry a rahdarri and a dhakala when they moved with their cattle.[74] Traditionally, fairs, bazaars and jataras were the principal centres for the cattle trade in India. In Hyderabad State, about 164 cattle fairs and bazaars were organised on a weekly, biweekly or yearly basis, where the Lambadas sold their cattle. There was no concept of rahdarri and dhakala in this system. These fairs were often held near a *nalla* (stream), to provide water for both people and animals.[75] There was a spurt in trade activities during the off-season for agriculture, from April to July, when peasants sold old cattle and bought new ones.[76] The Lambada cattle traders, in addition to these bazaars and fairs, also traversed the rest of the country to sell their cattle. Agricultural communities like the Kunbi, Kapu, etc., and deshmukhs and other well-to-do peasants purchased cattle from

71 APSA, Military, Inst. 11, List 2, S. no.796, File no. K1/g46/1909, 2.

72 APSA, NHD, File no. 30/1351F (1941–42), 11.

73 APSA, NRAD, Inst. 13, List 1, S. no. 388, File no. R4/d46/1898, 8.

74 Maulavi Cheragh Ali, Hyderabad (Deccan), 397, Appendix, xi.

75 *Cattle Census Report 1329F* (1919–1920), 19; *Livestock Census 1344F* (1934–1935), 50.

76 *Livestock Census of Hyderabad State for 1355F* (1945–1946) (Hyderabad-Dn.: Government Central Press, 1951), 59.

them, either on payment of cash or on credit. In the latter case, the price of the cattle was enhanced up to nearly 50 per cent and the cost recovered by instalments extending over a year and a half. In some cases, it was stipulated that the repayments would be made at the end of each harvest. In Mahbubnagar, the practice seemed to be to demand payment in three instalments, increasing the cost price by 25 per cent. In the Karimnagar district, grain was sometimes paid in exchange for the animals.[77]

These loosely built local trade relations were affected once the state began intervening from the middle of the nineteenth century on the grounds of rational governance. The Local Board Department was given a free hand to regulate cattle markets and fairs. The net result was a more systematic regulation of cattle markets. The *tahsildar* (revenue collector at taluka level) was put in charge of monitoring and regulating these fairs.[78] According to the new rules, those driving cattle to a fair had to carry a rahdarri and dhakala issued by the village police patel, often after offering him a *mamul*. It was not possible to make a sale deal without a rahdarri. For the Lambadas, who were constantly on the move, it was difficult to procure these licenses, and they were often victimised by corrupt village police patels and chowkidars. To escape the new laws, they would often travel through forest tracts. But they were hunted down even in the forests. Once, when a Lambada party was driving fifty-three cattle through the forest of Narsapur in the Nirmal taluka, the police patel of the village harassed them for dhakala and rahdarri. When they failed to produce the papers, he tried to extract a mamul from them. One of the Lambadas, in a bid to escape, bit a cow's tail to start a stampede to escape from there.[79]

Harassment by local officials was a regular experience for the Lambadas. Since they had to drive their cattle for months together and stay away from their homes, it was difficult for them to get a dhakala and rahdarri for each beast. Transit duty between the Nizam's and British territories was abolished, but the village police

77 *Cattle Census Report 1329F* (1919–20), 19.

78 *Imperial Gazetteer Hyderabad*, 64.

79 *Report on the Administration of the District Police of H.H. the Nizam's Government for the year 1321F (7 October 1911 – 5 October 1912)* (Hyderabad-Dn.: Central Jail Press, 1913), 20.

patel continued to collect these taxes; the situation was especially bad in jagir and *samasthan* (estates of traditional local rulers) villages.[80]

The cattle traders also had to pay a customs duty of five per cent on the value of the cattle if they operated their trade beyond the Nizam's territories. Even when the supply was meant for the government or the Residency, they were forced to first pay the duty, which would be reimbursed later but only after a lengthy process, often involving a payment of a mamul to the officials.[81] As the dates of the fairs were fixed, these delays prevented them from reaching them on time. It was also reported that many fairs suffered from the poor turn-out because of the harassment and delays created for the cattle sellers by the custom chowkies.[82] Many Lambadas driving their cattle to the Berar, Bombay and Madras presidency cattle fairs were stopped and harassed by the customs chowkidars and police on the road.[83] They were targeted more than any of the others because of the stigma of being a criminal tribe. For example, when Dhana Motiram Banjara, one of the Nizam's subjects, was travelling in the British territories with a cattle herd, he was stopped by the local village patel in Khandesh and his cattle were kept under police custody on the accusation that they were stolen from Jankiram Sadashiv Kunbi of Pimpri village.[84] Most cases turned out to be false on subsequent inquiry. There were innumerable cases in which they were caught by customs and police officials and harassed in both the Nizam's and British territories.[85]

The new system of transaction introduced middlemen into the market. Often the terms of the transactions were forced on the Lambadas.[86] The illiterate Lambadas could not quickly grasp the dynamics of market prices and by the time they understood what was going on they had lost control of a deal. The middlemen would often buy cattle from the local traders (Lambadas) by paying a

80 *Report on the Administration of His Highness the Nizam's dominions for 1294F* (1884–85), 246.
81 APSA, NRAD, Inst. 13, List 1, S. no.1096, File no. R4/a88/1922, 1.
82 APSA, Customs, Inst. 13, List 1, S. no.167, File no. R4/d21/1886, 2–3.
83 Balfour, *On the ethnography of Hyderabad*, 11–12.
84 APSA, NJD, Inst. 70, List 3, S. no. 219, File no. H4/c6013/1946, 29.
85 APSA, NRAD, Inst. 13, List 1, S. no. 388, File no. R4/d46/1898, 2–8.
86 *Livestock Census 1344F* (1934–1935), 50.

token and in turn sell them at higher price to peasants and pocket the profits. As noted in the *Gazetteer of Hyderabad State* of 1909, prices of cattle varied from Rs 40 to Rs 150 or even Rs 200 for a pair. The Krishna Valley, Ongole and Devarakonda breeds, which were said to be a hardy stock, used to fare better in the market than the local breeds, which were considered to be inferior and largely owned by the Lambadas.[87] Many traditional fairs were disappearing fast, and trade became more concentrated in a few big towns. The marketplaces were badly maintained, although a *tah-bazari* (sales tax) was collected from the cattle owners. These places suffered from a lack of basic facilities like drinking water, fodder and shelter. Nor was there any system of keeping the animals in regular rows or lines to make it easy for the buyers and sellers.[88] The cattle sold at the local fairs and bazaars were exported to British India. The highest export of cattle was from Jalna (Aurangabad) and Amrabad (Mahbubnagar) markets. About 23,000 cattle were exported annually from the Amrabad market, which was largely attended by the Lambadas.[89] The balance of trade was always in favour of the state exchequer. For instance, in 1921, the value of exports was Rs 1,535,387 against an import value of Rs 683,090.[90]

The Livestock Census Report of 1935–36 observed that the huge export was due to the excess flow of cattle and the healthy cattle trade in the state.[91] However, it might also be noted that the state's harsh policies towards long-established cattle-raisers drove them to dispose of their cattle wealth; as we shall see shortly, many cattle raisers sold their cattle due to scanty fodder and contagious diseases. It was also partly due to the growth of laissez-fare tendencies in the state, which always benefited the interests of the British territories. The state regulation established bigger cattle markets, and this resulted in the emergence of large-scale cattle traders in the urban centres, many of whom were Muslims.[92] When the Agricultural Market Act of 1342F (1931–32) was promulgated, cattle markets

87 *Imperial Gazetteer, Hyderabad*, 33.
88 *Livestock Census 1344F* (1934–1935), 50.
89 *Cattle Census Report* 1329F (1919–20), 18.
90 *Livestock Census 1344F* (1934–35), 56.
91 Ibid., 56.
92 *Livestock Census 1349F* (1939–40), 38.

were also brought under it. Hyderabad appears to be the first state to pass such an Act, which furthered regulated the cattle trade. All these developments contributed to the sedentarisation of the Lambada cattle traders.[93]

Regulation of Forests and Enclosure of Grazing Pastures

Forest regulations played a major role in undermining the cattle wealth of Hyderabad State. As Kesava Iyengar observed, 'the insufficient conservation and the adoption of so-called scientific forestry had shrunk the grazing land quickly and ruined the cattle wealth of the Hyderabad State.'[94] The state began controlling forest resources under a policy of rational governance of forests from the 1860s. The forest Acts were brought into force to regulate use of forest wood, grazing pasture and minor forest produce. These forest resources had in the past been utilised by the local people. The Lambadas, particularly, depended entirely on the forests for grazing their cattle. But the state control over the forest resources and enclosure of grazing pastures axed their long-established rights over these natural resources. We shall now discuss how the so-called rational governance of the forests shrunk the grazing lands, and how the state policies on forests worked against the interests of the cattle-raising Lambadas.

Hyderabad State had a rich grazing tract thanks to its geographical setting. It occupied almost the centre of the Deccan plateau. The huge range of Balaghat hills that extended to about two hundred miles from the east of Nanded to Ashti of Bhir and parts of Gulbarga and Osmanabad, and Sahyadri hills that run along the north, through Nirmal and Parbhani were home to rich forests. These forests were found at the source of the rivers Godavari, Krishna, Tungabhadra, Purna, Penganga, Manjira, Bhima, and Maner.[95] It was because of these rich grazing pastures that the cattle-herding Lambadas made these regions their permanent home when they were detached from the army.

93 *Report on the Working of the Hyderabad Agricultural Market Act 1342F* (Hyderabad-Dn.: Government Central Press, 1933), 1–3.

94 Iyengar, *Rural Economic Enquiries*, 137.

95 *Imperial Gazetteer Hyderabad*, 1–2.

When the Lambadas provided commissariat transportation to the army, there had been no problem for cattle fodder. As discussed in the last chapter, army commanders gave them a free hand to collect fodder from any source or any individual during the war period, or the emperor or the commander might assure that they were provided with cattle fodder.[96] Besides this, there were vast, uncontrolled grazing pastures all over the country, where they used to graze their cattle freely. This enabled them to enhance their cattle strength; so they were able to increase their profits from trading. It was reported that they spent all that they earned on purchasing new cattle to replace those they had lost in the course of their campaigns and long journeys.[97] This is not, however, to suggest that there was no problem with insufficient fodder in pre-colonial and early colonial India. The regular flow of imperial troops through villages caused an overall shortage of fodder in the settled peasant society, particularly in the eighteenth century. But the frontiers, which were loosely controlled by the state, provided considerable grazing patches to pastoral cattle.[98]

After they broke with the army, the Lambadas started moving deeper into the forests in search of grazing pastures. Once their cattle had finished grazing, they set fire to the withered grass and fallen dry leaves in the hot season, with the objective of securing a fresh growth of green grass with the advent of the monsoon.[99] However, these wide, free grazing pastures were seized when the state created the Forest Department in 1867 and brought the grazing land under its control.[100] Although the state, its agent-contractors, and the jagirdars openly plundered the forests, the forest officials pointed the finger of blame at the cattle grazers. The *Forest Administration Report* of the Nizam's government observed:

96 Lyall, *Gazetteer for the Haidarabad*, 196.

97 Briggs, 'Accounts of the Origin', 193.

98 Chetan Singh, 'Forest, Pastoralists and Agrarian Society in Mughal India', in *Nature, Culture, Imperialism: Essays on the Environmental History of South Asia*, eds. David Arnold and Ramachandra Guha (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1995), 21–48.

99 *Annual Progress Report of Forest Administration 1305F* (1895–96), 16.

100 *Report on the Administration of His Highness the Nizam's Dominions for the Year 1331F* (1921–22) (Hyderabad-Deccan, The Government Central Press, 1923), 61.

> Practically there is no protection from cattle, and the forests are suffering from heavier grazing than they can support without deterioration...in addition to the local cattle there are vast herds of nomadic cattle belonging to Lambadas which overtax the existing forests, and owing to the great extension of cultivation in recent years the number of cattle is increasing while the forest area available for grazing is decreasing. Until the grazing is restricted to the capabilities of the forests it is hopeless to expect good natural regeneration and improvement of existing growth. The cattle having eaten all the grass become browsers and eat down young growth, while the graziers carry on the work of destruction by lopping trees to provide fodder for their cattle.[101]

The forest officials adopted this view right from the beginning when the department was set up, which severely affected the nomadic or Lambadas' cattle. Under the policy of so-called 'scientific' extraction of forest resources the state began imposing a tax for grazing cattle in forest. Grazing tax was collected through the Forest and the Revenue Departments and contractors. One aim of this move was to check nomadic cattle. In the beginning, grazing revenue was collected by the revenue officials at the rate of one anna per cattle head in the form of a cess called the *bancharai* or permit pass system and the amount was credited to the Forest Department.[102] The Forest Department started collecting grazing tax from 1894 at the rate of two-and-a-half annas per cattle head, in both the reserved and protected forests. However, the Revenue Department continued to collect bancharai in the open forests.[103] Henceforth, the grazing tax in reserved and protected forest areas was under the control of the Forest Department and in the open forest under the Revenue Department.

Another source from whom grazing taxes were extracted were the contractors who occupied huge forest areas on lease. The revenue authorities auctioned the rights over the open forests to the highest

101 *Administration Report of the Forest Department of H.E.H. the Nizam's Dominions for the Year 1323F.* (1913–14) (Secunderabad: Cheekoty Veerunnah & Sons, Government Printers, 1915), 5.

102 APSA, NRAD, Inst. 37, List 7, S. no. 38, File no. A5/b11/1879, 38; *The Hyderabad Forest Conference 1332F* (1922–23) (Hyderabad-Dn, APSA, R-22), 10.

103 *Annual Progress Report of Forest Administration 1305F* (1895–96), 24; *The Hyderabad Forest Conference 1332F* (1922–23), 13.

bidder. The contractors were mostly from the dominant peasant castes or village officials.[104] Peasants such as these were, however, allowed to graze their cattle in all kinds of forests and banjar land under the permit pass system, and the grazing tax was collected annually along with land revenue. But the cattle-raisers, such as the Lambadas, who did not own land and were not agriculturists, were subject to the power of the forest officials and contractors, who frequently harassed them and extorted payments from them illegally. It is worth quoting the Forest Conservator's observation on this practice:

> I generally found on enquiry that the contractors (generally village officials) took very high rates from the ryot and no animals were exempted. The amount realized in the auction, however, was trivial and the authorised rate per head quite nominal.[105]

Haimendorf reported that the contractors took grass, *chirongi* and *mahua* on lease, not to export these articles for sale, but only with a view to levying a tax on the adivasis.[106] They allowed the cattle to graze in their leased area and collected tax at the end of the year from the graziers at the rate of twenty-five paisa per cow, eighty-seven paisa per buffalo, and twelve paisa per goat. These were official rates and varied from place to place.[107]

The government had no control over the malpractices committed at the local level. No proper record was maintained of taxes collected, and no comparison made between official rates and actual collection. On paper, it was lauded that the rates were cheaper than those of British India, whereas in practice they were much higher and poorly controlled.[108]

The grazing tax was enhanced drastically in the early twentieth century. Under the revised rule of 1914–15, the Forest Department enhanced the grazing tax from two-and-a-half annas to four annas

104 *Administration Report of the Forest Department of His Highness the Nizam's Dominions for the Year 1313F* (1903–4) (Hyderabad-Deccan: A. Venoogopul Pillai & Sons, 1905), 22.

105 Ibid., 22.

106 Haimendorf, *The Tribal Hyderabad*, 105.

107 Ibid., 106–107.

108 *The Hyderabad Forest Conference 1332F* (1922–23), 10.

per cattle head. The rule at that time was to base the grazing tax rate on the price and value of grass in the market. But it was decided in the Hyderabad Forest Conference of 1922–23 to take the market value of cattle and agricultural produce as the basis and the grazing tax was hiked massively. M. M. Ali Beg, Conservator of the Eastern Circle, noted at the Conference that since there was a steep increase in the value of land and its produce, the prices of agricultural cattle and non-agricultural cattle had been bringing good returns to their owner; it was therefore in order to increase the grazing fees for both.[109] According to the new proposal applicable across the state, the Forest Department decided to collect one rupee per cow or bull, two rupees per elephant or camel, one rupee and four annas per horse, and four annas per sheep. However, anticipating a huge objection from the peasants to this sudden hike, it was decided to begin with eight annas per cattle head from 1923 and increase it in a phased manner over four years at the rate of two annas every year.[110]

The areas leased to the British in Hyderabad State were not exempt from this new tax. This tempted the jagirdars, *ijaradars*, *banjardars* (landlords) and other landholders to hike the grazing charges abruptly on their grazing pastures, too. They maintained large grazing pastures on their patta land, and allowed cattle to graze in their pasture for a fee, charging one to three rupees per head. These rates were enhanced further when the Forest Department hiked their charges.[111] The village heads and officials would also claim a right on the village's natural resources, wastelands, hill lands and water, and charge peasants for grazing cattle in those lands. In fact, according to the Revenue Code of 1908, the village natural resources were open for free grazing to villagers, but the officials continued to collect some form of fees on those lands.[112]

As all the grazing land was enclosed and strictly regulated, and stiff fees charged, the cattle-raisers suffered badly. Most cattle raisers neither had any land of their own for grazing nor could they store *kadabi* (jawar stalk) for fodder like settled peasants. There was an

109 Ibid., 9–11.

110 Ibid., 12–13.

111 Ibid., 13.

112 *Nizam Revenue Administration Report 1324F* (1914–15), 50.

adverse reaction from the peasants and the Lambadas to this new proposal for higher taxes. The former either began to graze their cattle illicitly or sold away their cattle.[113] But illicit grazing was deemed theft from the end of the nineteenth century, and if a case was booked it could mean a visit to the police station. The Forest Department Reports noted an abrupt increase in illicit grazing from 1924. For instance, in 1936 alone, 6,670 persons were booked for illicit grazing, while many cases were not followed up.[114]

The regulation and enclosure of forest lands took a particularly huge toll of cattle during famines, for want of fodder. The first famine after the introduction of forest regulation occurred in 1876–78. It affected the whole of the state, killing 432,926 cattle.[115] The 1899–1900 famine was the most devastating, in which out of a total of 5,210,566 cattle (agricultural and non-agricultural) in the state, 721,542, or 14 per cent, died. Apart from this, 503,522, or 9.7 per cent, of the cattle were taken away to other places for grazing, and a very large number of them probably died. In fact, there were no accurate records to precisely indicate the magnitude of loss. In the case of agricultural cattle, out of a total of 1,577,803 (cows and bulls), 483,520 (24.3 per cent) died. In the more seriously affected districts, as shown in Table 2, the loss was 333,930 (nearly 40 per cent) out of 765,647 heads of cattle.[116] The loss was mainly because of the grazing policies and the state's indifference. At the beginning of the famine, the state tried to provide some fodder to the farmers (not to the cattle raisers) of the affected districts from Telangana and Berar forests, but the forest officials were insensitive. The Revenue Department was also indifferent, saying that the cost of fodder was prohibitive, and therefore the measure had to be dropped. The cattle camps could only be established on the banks of the Godavari and one or two other rivers, where water was available. To worsen the situation, immense quantities of grass were being supplied

113 *Administration Report of the Forest Department of H.E.H. the Nizam's Dominions for the Year 1340F* (1930–31) (Hyderabad-Deccan, Government Central Press, 1934), 21.

114 *Administration Report of the Forest Department of H.E.H. the Nizam's Dominions for the Year 1346F* (1936–37) (Hyderabad-Deccan, Government Central Press, 1938), 11.

115 Vaikuntham, *State, Economy and Social Transformation*, 87.

116 Dunlop, *Report on the Famine Relief*, 23.

from the forests to big cattle owners, *karkhanas* (factories), and the Hyderabad Contingent. This further accentuated the inequalities in the fodder market and deprived the peasants and cattle-raisers of access to fodder.[117]

The rumnahs that were usually auctioned to contractors were set free for public use and the forests were filled with cattle. But as many of the rumnhas were already auctioned off to contractors, the latter levied fees (one to two annas) and made handsome returns out of the remaining dry grass. The reserve forests were also thrown open to free grazing from 2 February 1900, except for the Pakhal reserve, where the right to collect fees had been auctioned. Unfortunately, the Forest Department burned all the grass months earlier than usual. Except in the few tracts left untouched by forest fires and in the forests adjacent to Yellandu, Mankota, and the Pahkal Lake, there was little grass left after 1 February, and the starving cattle had to subsist on the leaves of trees.[118]

Table 2: Loss of agricultural cattle in famine-affected districts

Districts	Total at commencement of famine	Died	Taken for grazing	Unaccounted For	Stock at end of famine
Aurangabad	175,305	59,836	40,488	6,211	68,770
Bhir	155,862	24,607	9,222	14,287	107,746
Parbhani	80,041	11,436	4,128	30,473	34,004
Nanded	58,165	10,949	10,324	807	36,085
Naldurg	110,535	29,547	7,431	13,338	60,219
Gulbarga	108,110	8,462	9,103	5,848	84,697
Bidar	77,629	23,135	14,298	N/A	40,196
Total	**765,649**	**167,972**	**94,994**	**70,964**	**431,717**

Source: Dunlop, *Report on the Famine Relief*, 23.

The Lambadas' cattle were the worst affected in the famine due to the callous attitude of the Forest Department officials in particular and the state in general. Indeed, the forest officials were happy about

117 Ibid., 25.
118 Ibid., 25.

the loss of nomadic cattle that were presumed to be the destroyers of forests. The Assistant Conservator of Warangal stated that:

> A large numbers of cattle died during the year for want of fodder and water but I do not see that it is a cause for regret as the people had kept immense numbers of utterly useless cattle and it was mostly these which died as, generally speaking, care was taken by owners to incur even extra expense to keep alive those cattle which were really worth having. I regret to state though that a large number of cattle used for agricultural purposes also died.[119]

A similar sort of attitude prevailed among forest officials during the 1918–19 famine, in which 147,482 agricultural and 204,900 non-agricultural cattle died for want of fodder, and 24,142 agricultural and 40,201 non-agricultural cattle did not return from grazing.[120] This also forced many cattle owners and breeders to sell their cattle at cheaper rates.[121] The famine reduced the number of cattle breeders from 42,418 (1911) to 27,999 (1921), a decrease of 34 per cent in the state.[122]

The famine was greatly exacerbated by both the forest policy and rapid decrease of forest cover in the state. This decrease, along with the indifferent attitude of the forest and revenue officials towards cattle and cattle-raisers, created a situation where fodder was insufficient. This resulted in a huge loss of cattle wealth in the state. Generally, cattle raisers were held responsible for the declining forest cover. The Hyderabad Forest Conference proclaimed that 'our foremost aim should be to organise the forest and popularise our noble work of forest conservancy, among the ignorant rural population, who were, till lately enjoying free access to the forest.'[123] Yet, in reality, the destruction of the forests began when they were brought under state control. The Forest Department from the beginning focused on extracting the forest resources for monetary returns. The

119 Ibid., 26.
120 Vaikuntham, *State, Economy and Social Transformation*, 96.
121 Mohamad Ali, *Report on the Famine Relief Operation in His Exalted Highness the Nizam's Dominions, During 1328F, 1329F, and 1330F (1918–30)* (Hyderabad-Dn.: Government Central Press, 1923), 22.
122 *Census of India 1921, Vol. XXI, Hyderabad State* (Hyderabad-Dn.: The Government Central Press, 1923), part I, 270.
123 *The Hyderabad Forest Conference 1332F* (1924–25), 24.

Department's main focus was solely on valuable species of trees such as sandal, teak, *sheeshum*, ebony, satin, *eppa*, *nallamuddy*, *dhaura*, etc.[124] The Nizam's agents, the zamindars, maktadars, jagirdars, and forest contractors and village officials, were allowed to indulge in open plunder.

A British Indian forest officer called Ballantiza was invited in 1887 to investigate the forest resources of the state. He suggested a number of so-called scientific ways to exploit forest resources during his five years of service for Hyderabad.[125] The Forest Code of British India was as a result introduced in the state in 1895 so as to further 'scientific forestry'. Under this new doctrine, forests were categorised as 'reserve', 'protected' and 'open' forests.[126] Nevertheless, the open plunder continued. Until the 1920s, no recognition was given to the fact that the forests met a variety of needs and were not merely an exploitable economic resource. As has been brought out in recent study:

> The forests of south Asia have a wide variety of historical meaning and usages. They served as homes and sources of livelihood for their inhabitants, as well as of fuel, building materials, famine foods, and medicines for neighbouring people. They provided a home for bandits and rebels, and equally an obstacle to invasion and expansionist ambitions of the state. They accommodated wild animals and nurtured disease environments that were often fatally inhospitable to outsiders.[127]

Yet, the state saw the forests as just quasi-economic entities that earned revenue for the treasury, and by the time it realised their social importance a great many things had disappeared.[128] At the beginning of the twentieth century, the state had about 18,000 square miles of forest cover.[129] By 1938, this had decreased to

124 *Annual Progress Report of Forest Administration in His Highness the Nizam's Dominions for the Year 1309F* (1899–1900) (Hyderabad-Dn: A. Venoogopal Pillai & Sons Printers to H.H. the Nizam's Government, 1901), 9.

125 *Report on the Administration of His Highness the Nizam's 1331F* (1921–22), 61.

126 *Annual Progress Report of Forest Administration 1305F* (1895–96), 10.

127 Arnold, *Nature, Culture, Imperialism*, 10.

128 *Administration Report of the Forest Department of H.E.H. the Nizam's Dominions for the Year 1331F* (1921–22) (Hyderabad-Deccan: Government Central Press, 1924), 2.

129 *Imperial Gazetteer Hyderabad*, 36.

9,486.87 square miles, of which 388.78 were reserved, 7,932.00 protected, and 1,216.09 open forest.[130] This constituted less than 10 per cent of the total area of the state and fell far below the suggested minimum forest area of 20 to 25 per cent.[131]

This decrease was brought about above all through the commercial exploitation of forest resources, the state land tenure system and the commercialisation of agriculture. The major (both green and dry timber and fuel) and minor (fruits and grass) produce of forests used to be sold from the reserved and open forests on the permit system given on public auction. When the contractors cleared vast forests within short periods, it was decided to auction only dry timber. This encouraged the contractors and purchasers to create dead wood by girdling the green trees, with a view to cutting them in the near future. Those contractors who were given permission only for minor produce also extracted large amounts of timber from their permitted areas, with the connivance of the forest officials.[132] The contract system in jagir and Samasthan territories was worse. The contractors used to exploit the forest irresponsibly and unrestrictedly, and the jagirdar and the samasthandar could not say no to their exploitation as they used to borrow money from them.[133]

Industrialisation and construction of railways in the state also placed severe strain on the forests. The state forest was used to supply sleepers for the railways. In 1898 alone, 18,598 sleepers were supplied to the HGV railway, the profit realised being Rs 21,512.[134] Softwood species were cut for use in the match factory started at Mahbubabad in the year 1928, and the *beedi* (small cigar) leaves for the cottage industries spread across the state. The timber requirement for the Singareni Coal Mines at Bellampalli, Mandamarri and Ramakirishnapur in Adilabad district and Ramagundam in Karimnagar district was largely met from the forests of Adilabad

130 *Administration Report of the Forest Department of H.E.H. the Nizam's Dominions for the Year 1348F* (1938–1939) (Hyderabad-Dn.: Government Central Press, 1940), 4.

131 *Administration Report of the Forest Department 1331F* (1921–1922), 2.

132 *The Hyderabad Forest Conference 1332F* (1922–23), 20.

133 *A working Plan for the Forest of the Paloncha Estate Division, from 1353F to 1362 (1943–1952)* (Hyderabad-Dn: The General Typewriting Co., 1952), 36.

134 *Annual Progress Report of Forest Administration 1308F* (1898–99), 1.

and Warangal.[135] The total revenue collected from forest produce in 1937–38 was Rs 1,611,749 as against Rs 288,337 in 1899–1900.[136]

From the beginning of the twentieth century, the forests were extensively cleared for cultivation under the *ijara* and *banjar* systems. The government issued a circular in 1904, by which talukdars were empowered to hand over forest land from any block for cultivation and to dispose of the timber without reference to the Forest Department.[137] Under this tenure system, many influential persons in the state bureaucracy and from the dominant peasant castes grabbed thousands of acres of forest land. Many *watandars* (old revenue collectors at village level) were also compensated with the forest land when their *watan* (revenue collection) rights were abolished. It was a common practice that if a watandar was given 500 acres according to the *sanad* (government order), he would expand it to 5,000 acres; and the government always almost sided with the watandar and most graciously allowed him 5,000 acres instead of 500.[138] In 1909, 231,266 acres of open forest land was given for cultivation, resulting in the destruction of 361.34 square miles of state forest.[139]

The state's and the peasants' obsession with commercial crops, especially cotton, encouraged by the British, played a considerable role in the shrinking of forest lands. We shall discuss this in detail in Chapter 5.

A huge forest area was cleared for the cultivation of cotton, particularly in the Maratha region and the Warangal district of Telangana.[140] Satya has clearly brought out how this phenomenon

135 Reddy, *Economic History*, 26.

136 *Administration Report of the Forest Department 1348F* (1938–1939), 5; *Annual Progress Report of Forest Administration 1309F* (1899–1900), 1.

137 *Administration Report of the Forest Department of His Highness the Nizam's Dominions for the Year 1315F* (1905–6) (APSA, R-22), 2.

138 *Hyderabad Forest Conference 1332F* (1922–23), 2.

139 *Administration Report of the Forest Department of His Highness the Nizam's Dominions for the Year 1319F* (1909–10) (Hyderabad-Deccan: A. Venoogopaul Pillai & Sons, 1912), 3.

140 *Annual Administration Report of the Department of Agriculture H.E.H. the Nizam's Government for the Year 1323 F* (1913–1914) (Hyderabad-Dn.: Central Jail Press, 1915), 1.

ultimately resulted in a sharp decline in grazing land in the Berar region.[141]

The formation of *shikargahs* (hunting blocks) also decreased grazing land in the forest, as grazing was strictly prohibited in these blocks. In fact, because of the shikargahs, the Lambadas lost many of their cattle to attacks by tigers and leopards. To satisfy the hunting desires of the military officers of the Hyderabad Contingency and the nobles of the Nizam's court, the Forest Department formed nineteen shikargahs, spread over the Asifabad, Karimnagar, Nirmal, Nizamabad and Nanded forest divisions. These were close to the grazing circles and when the cattle happened to stray into them, wild beasts would attack them.[142] The forest report states that there were regular tiger attacks on cattle. In fact, a Lambada of Pulur village in Yellandu taluka made a request to the forest officials to kill a tiger which had eaten twenty-six of his cattle.[143] The general practice was that whenever a cattle-killing was reported, the forest officials would ask the military officers to kill the tiger by offering a handsome reward.[144]

The state's dubious conservation project caused a rapid decline in the forests. The Forest Survey and Settlement Department, maintained from 1903, spent all its time handing over the forest land to big landlords and village officials rather than protecting and helping regenerate the forest.[145] An attempt was made to replant the forests and allow the growth of coppice shoots from 1903, but very little was achieved in this respect at that time. In 1931, L. Mason, Inspector General of Forests to the Government of India, was invited on a three-week visit to Hyderabad to suggest how to preserve the forests. On his suggestion, the Forest Department accelerated, to some extent, the regeneration project.[146] But it again worked against the cattle raisers' interests, as a lot of grazing land was brought

141 Satya *Ecology, Colonialism*, 66–121.

142 *Administration Report of the Forest Department 1348F* (1938–1939), 48.

143 APSA, NFD, Inst. 38, List 2, S. no. 66, File no. G1/c33/1901, 6.

144 APSA, NFD, Inst. 38, List 2, S. no. 36, File no. G2/a1/1893, 97.

145 *Administration Report of the Forest Department of H.E.H. the Nizam's Dominions for the Year 1322F* (1912–13) (Hyderabad-Deccan: A. V. Pillai & Sons, 1915), 3.

146 L. Mason, *Notes on the Progress Made by the Hyderabad Forest Department Since my Report as Forest Advisor in 1341F (1931–1932)* (Hyderabad-Dn.: Government Central Press, 1938), 9.

under this project, with grazing being strictly prohibited on this territory. In Aurangabad district alone, 8,600 acres of grazing land were brought under this project.[147]

As the forest cover shrank, cattle fodder became increasingly scarce, which hurt the cattle breeders. To overcome this problem, the Forest Department came out with a scientific grazing system called the working plan. Under this plan, cattle and goat grazing circles were formed in both reserved and protected forest areas, except in those areas marked for regeneration, and areas which the Divisional Forest Officer thought fit to be closed for grazing. Although first formulated in 1913, the plan was not implemented until 1928. It was extended with the appointment of Mr Vaman Rao as the working plan officer.[148] Under this scheme, the closing period for grazing was fixed at eight years, sometimes ten years, at each circle alternatively, to avoid forest destruction and to facilitate regeneration.[149] This system, too, curtailed the grazing area rapidly, as grazing was allowed only in a few circles and most of them had been closed for years. This can be seen from the decreasing grazing incidence of acres of forest per head of cattle. In 1924, the area per head of cattle was 7.22 acres,[150] which came down to 2.99 acres in 1929[151] and went on decreasing steadily. The figure per acre was as low as six cattle by the end of 1950. There was also a reduction in fodder crops in the state. Between 1936 and 1945, fodder crop cultivation fell from 518,000 to 58,000 acres. This declined further to 45,000 acres in 1948 due to the spread of commercial crops encouraged by the demand during the Second World War.[152]

Owing to ongoing opposition by peasants and adivasis to their loss of forest resources, the state came out with a policy in 1920 to

147 Iyengar, *Rural Economic Enquiries* , 127.

148 *Administration Report of the Forest Department of H.E.H. the Nizam's Dominions for the Year1338F* (1928–29) (Hyderabad-Deccan: Government Central Press, 1932), 13.

149 *Administration Report of the Forest Department of H.E.H. the Nizam's Dominions for the Year 1328F* (1918–19) (Hyderabad-Dn.: Government Central Press, 1920), 26.

150 *Administration Report of the Forest Department of H.E.H. the Nizam's Dominions for the Year1334F* (1924–25) (APSA, R-22), 14.

151 *Administration Report of the Forest Department 1338F* (1928–29), 15.

152 Iyengar, *Rural Economic Enquiries*, 131.

form village forests to provide grazing and fuel for adivasis (Gond, Koya and Lambada). Although the Conservator issued directives to form village forests at soon as possible, little was done as the Divisional Conservators were hostile to the idea.[153] Many of them ignored this issue in their forest reports. In 1929, the Divisional Conservators of Mahbubnagar, Warangal and Aurangabad stated that no area was available to form village forests.[154] Had the forest officials acted promptly on this plan, the Lambadas would have benefited a lot, and they might have been able to preserve their cattle wealth.

Thus the state's regulation of forest lands ensured enclosure of grazing pastures, as a result of which cattle movement was monitored, checked and taxed everywhere. The outcome was that cattle either died due to contagious diseases or were sold by their owners. Owing to the heavy taxation, many peasants and cattle breeders, including the Lambadas, sold their cattle for export to British India. In 1930, realising that the numbers of agricultural cattle had fallen drastically, the state abolished the grazing cess that had been collected by the Revenue Department at the rate of six annas per cattle head. But it did little to help those whose livelihood depended solely on rearing cattle. Many Lambadas of Karimnagar, Warangal and Mahbubnagar sold their cattle at cheaper rates due to the terrible harassment by forest and village officials as well as by the police department because of their 'criminal' stigma.[155] Particularly during the famine, it was reported that the Lambadas sold their cattle to butchers at rates so cheap that it sometimes just fetched the cost of the skin.[156]

153 *Administration Report of the Forest Department of H.E.H. the Nizam's Dominions for the Year 1329F* (1919–20) (Hyderabad-Deccan: Government Central Press, 1921), 4.

154 *Administration Report of the Forest Department of H.E.H. the Nizam's Dominions for the Year1339F* (1929–30) (Hyderabad-Deccan: Government Central Press, 1934), 2.

155 *Administration Report of the Forest Department 1340F* (1930–31), 21.

156 *Cattle Census Report 1329F* (1919–20), 18.

CATTLE DISEASES AND THE GOVERNANCE OF HEALTH

The policing of cattle exacted a heavy toll. Cattle, unlike in the past, became more susceptible to diseases during the colonial rule. This was because of the impoverishment of cattle owners and the government's restrictive pasture regulations. Another cause was the growth of a large-scale trade in cattle and meat products, which allowed for the more rapid transmission of cattle diseases. This is evident in the case of the Lambadas. Until the middle of the nineteenth century, records and ethnographic notes had described their cattle as hardy and magnificent animals. Balfour noted that 'their carriage is solely their bullocks: these are magnificent animals; and it is a grand sight to see a Banjara thanda laden with cotton or grain traversing the country through pathways.'[157] But, as we have seen in the preceding sections, from the late nineteenth century, the Lambadas' cattle came to be considered worthless, weak, and unfit for agriculture. It is probable that the quality of their cattle declined due to malnutrition caused by the loss of available fodder through state regulations. It was inevitable for cattle that had become weakened through malnutrition to succumb to disease. The state failed to act, in part because of the fatal course of the diseases, and partly due to poor veterinary facilities.

The most devastating disease amongst bovine animals in the state was *bara-rog* (rinderpest, or cattle plague). The other relatively less severe diseases were *galla ghont* (haemorrhagic septicaemia), *zaharabad* (black quarters), *gilti* (anthrax) and *mook-khor* (foot and mouth) disease. Cattle attacked by rinderpest would become half conscious and extremely weak, and succumb within ten days after the attack. Once infected, they very rarely recovered.[158] It was said that this disease first appeared in Africa and entered British India around the last decade of the nineteenth century. The Madras Presidency had a bitter experience of it between 1908 and 1909, 149,666 cattle died of rinderpest.[159] It began to spread in Hyderabad State from the beginning of the twentieth century, wreaking havoc

157 Balfour, *On the Ethnology of Hyderabad*, 12.

158 *Cattle Census Report 1329F* (1919–1920), 23.

159 APSA, NRAD, Inst. 37, List 3, S. no. 81, File no. R2/d7/1914, 14.

by the second decade.[160] In 1914, 17, 836 cattle died, mostly of that disease.[161] In 1917–18, the number of cattle that died of contagious diseases was 15,381, out of which 10,549 deaths were due to rinderpest.[162] As shown in Table 3, there was a steady increase in cattle deaths due to contagious diseases in the state from the 1920s. The heavy toll in1925–26 was partly due to famine. But later on, the state was largely free from devastating famines, and the toll could be attributed to contagious diseases alone. Between 1930 and 1935, the losses totalled 106,609 heads of cattle.

TABLE 3: Deaths of cattle in Hyderabad State due to contagious diseases

Year	Total deaths	Year	Total deaths
1335F (1925–26)	18,316	1340F (1930–31)	20,520
1336F (1926–27)	4,211	1341F (1931–32)	22,233
1337F (1927–28)	1,365	1342F (1932–33)	23,186
1338F (1928–29)	5,987	1343F (1933–34)	22,097
1339F (1929–30)	8,885	1344F (1934–35)	18,573
Total	38, 764		106,609

Source: Livestock Census 1344F (1934–35), 82

Despite the great losses, the state was completely apathetic on the issue. It was reported that 'veterinary work in South Africa and British India affords ample vindication of the pessimistic argument that these diseases have existed from time immemorial and there is no use in combating them.'[163] The Nizam's government subscribed to the theory of the miasmic origin of diseases and did not come out with any concrete measures to save the cattle. Many colonial and state officials continued to believe dogmatically in this by-now outmoded theory of disease causation, in which it was held that miasmas or noxious air caused diseases, and that the tropical environment of Asia and India was naturally disease-prone in this way.[164] Although this notion was being replaced by the germ

160 APSA, NRAD, Inst. 37, List 3, S. no. 110, File no. R2/a18/1917, 39.

161 Ibid., S. no. 81, File no. R2/d7/1914, 16; *Annual Report on the Stud and Veterinary 1326F* (1916–1917), 1.

162 *Cattle Census Report 1329F* (1919–20), 50.

163 APSA, NRAD, Inst. 37, List 3, S. no. 110, File no. R2/a18/1917, 39.

164 Satya, *Ecology, Colonialism*, 130.

theory by the 1890s, it still continued to influence the mindset of the revenue and veterinary officials of Hyderabad state. In 1892, when plague broke out on a massive scale in the state and took a large toll on the cattle which mostly belonged to the Lambadas, the state remained largely a spectator, , because of the prevalence of the miasmic theory.[165] It continued to be adhered to in pockets even in the twentieth century, for example in the central and northern parts of Warangal (Mulugu, Pakhal and Mahbubabad) and in the Amrabad region of Mahbubnagar, where there was a concentration of Lambadas.[166]

One rather inadequate response by the Nizam's government was to buy literature about cattle diseases at the cost of the taxpayer. In 1896, for example, it purchased three hundred copies of a manual of cattle diseases for Rs 394 and ten paisa from the Madras government.[167] More concretely, it brought a colonial veterinary doctor, Mr Gough, from Madras, to study and suggest measures to tackle the cattle's contagious diseases. His most innovative suggestion was to segregate cattle during the spread of disease, something already done in British India. This led to the banning of cattle shows and fairs, and severe checks on the movements of Lambadas with their cattle. He suggested that there was no treatment for this disease and prevention was the only solution and that all cattle that died of such disease should be cremated.[168] In 1895, Denzil Ibbetson, the Secretary to the Government of India, wrote to the Nizam's Revenue Secretary that 'when a contagious disease among military animals, horse, camel and cattle is reported, it would be a good idea to ban the cattle shows and fairs and avoid military cattle associating with civil and nomadic animals.'[169]

The Madras government, in particular, was always suspicious of the Lambadas' cattle, and banned them from coming in from the Nizam's territories. The Madras government took stronger steps than the Nizam's government in curbing the disease because of its

165 APSA, NRAD, Inst. 37, List 3, S. no. 110, File no. R2/a18/1917, 23.

166 Keshav Iyengar, *Economic Investigation in the Hyderabad State 1929-30* , 5 vols. (Hyderabad-Dn.: Government Central Press, 1931–32), I: 17.

167 APSA, NRAD, Inst.37, List 3, S. no. 31, File no. R2/c2/1896, 9.

168 Ibid., S. no. 81, File no. R2/d7/1914, 14.

169 Ibid., S. no. 23, File no. R2/c1/1895, 7.

past experience with such maladies.[170] It also forced the Nizam's government to promulgate an act to stop cattle movement during an epidemic along the lines of the Glanders and Farcy Act (xiii of 1899) of British India. The Act was executed in the state without any modification, and infected cattle were segregated and their movement arrested as if on a war footing.[171] Those who breached the Act were punished, especially the Lambadas as they moved constantly with their cattle. The Malegaon cattle show, the biggest in the state, with participation from across the country, was cancelled in 1923 owing to the outbreak of plague in the neighbouring villages.[172] In fact, it became a regular practice to ban cattle shows and fairs whenever the state was visited by epidemics.

Despite the state's failure to check these diseases, the peasants managed to cure the foot and mouth disease, a severely painful condition, using traditional medicines, especially *neem* leaves. However, the colonial rulers always discounted traditional knowledge systems.[173] In fact, as David Arnold says, the colonial state saw Western science, technology and medicine as exemplary attributes of their 'civilising mission', being clear evidence of their own superiority over, and imperial responsibility for, a land they identified as superstitious and backward. Science was an instrument in distinguishing India from the West and establishing British authority over the Indian colony.[174] Cattle deaths due to contagious diseases were a regular experience for the cattle-breeding Lambadas. During the rainy and cold weather, prevalence of cattle diseases was high and exacted a heavy toll. The state's policy towards contagious diseases stopped cattle movement and banned the nomads from grazing cattle in the communal pastures; as a result, thousands of

170 APSA, NRAD, Inst. 37, List 3, S. no. 81, File no. R2/d7/1914, 16.

171 Ibid., S. no. 85, File no. R2/d8/1915, 2.

172 *Annual Report on the Stud and Veterinary Department of H.E.H. the Nizam's Government for the Year 1333F* (1923–1924) (Hyderabad-Dn.: Government Central Press, 1926), 1.

173 *Annual Report on the Stud and Veterinary Department 1327F* (1917–1918), 18.

174 David Arnold, *The New Cambridge History of India : Science, Technology and Medicine in Colonial India III*, 5 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 15.

their cattle died due to want of both grass and treatment.[175] There was no systematic documentation of these deaths. The village patwari, who was supposed to document the data, would refuse to register the dead cattle as the numbers rose beyond his capacity to count. Often when a village was hit by an epidemic, he would instruct the villagers to perform a sacrificial ceremony to the goddesses Pochamma, who was believed to be the protector of cattle.[176] An estimated figure of the dead cattle was given in the annual reports of the Veterinary Department. As seen earlier in this chapter, during the famine, the toll was particularly steep. It was reported that annual cattle deaths from contagious diseases were always more than 10,000 in the state during the period of study.[177]

Despite the widespread occurrence of contagious diseases in the state, the government never made any serious effort either to treat the infected animals or to vaccinate them as a precautionary measure. Although the Veterinary Department appears to have existed from 1884 as an auxiliary to the Department of Stud and Veterinary, the state did not have any veterinary hospitals for many years after. Only around 1912 was a veterinary hospital established in Hyderabad. But it could not function effectively owing to the First World War.[178] After the war ended, fitful efforts were made to strengthen the department. In 1918, the total strength of veterinary staff in the state was fifty-five, of which only six were trained doctors, the rest being general assistants.[179] This number reached 145 at the end of 1941.[180] There was no veterinary college or institution in the state, which depended on Bombay and Madras for training its veterinary doctors.[181] In 1921–22 there were only eight veterinary students studying at Bombay University from the state.[182]

175 APSA, NRAD, Inst. 37, List 3, S. no. 209, File no. R2/d23/1938, 9.

176 *Livestock Census 1344F* (1934–35), 49.

177 *Annual Administration Report of Civil Veterinary 1348F* (1938–1939), 7.

178 APSA, NRAD, Inst. 37, List 3, S. no. 110, File no. R2/a18/1917, 39.

179 *Annual Report on the Stud and Veterinary 1326F* (1916–1917), 4.

180 *Annual Administration Report of Civil Veterinary 1350F* (1940–1941), 13.

181 *Annual Report on the Stud and Veterinary Department 1333F* (1923–1924), 3.

182 *Annual Report on the Stud and Veterinary Department of H.E.H. the Nizam's Government for the Year 1331F* (1921–1922) (Hyderabad-Dn.: Government Central Press, 1926), 3.

The insufficient veterinary institutions, hospitals and infrastructure reflect the indifferent attitude of the state towards cattle health. In 1915, the total cattle inoculated and treated in the state were 5,093 and 51,840, respectively. However, some efforts were made in the subsequent years to improve the situation. District headquarters were equipped with a veterinary hospital (total fourteen in the state), besides sixty-two mobile hospitals that were on continuous tour around the state.[183] But the whole system had been engaged to treat military animals rather than the civilian ones. In 1924, anthrax erupted throughout the Aurangabad district. Immediately, the Veterinary Department was attached to the Aurangabad regiment to check the disease in the cantonment horses and milch cattle which were owned by the military, ignoring the civilian cattle.[184] The large majority of peasants was unaware of the existence of the Veterinary Department in the state, continuing for the most part to use traditional methods and treatments when diseases struck their cattle. These treatments had little chance of averting the severe epidemics of this period.

This deployment of governmental rationality in the state thus fractured long-established local practices, established new sets of power relations, and led to the enclosure of land as private and government property. In this new establishment, cattle and cattle-raising became a major issue for the state for two main reasons: (i) cattle were considered an important economic resource, for both tilling the land and dairy produce; and (ii) cattle trespass became a major law and order problem, particularly when it came to nomadic cattle. To deal with these issues the state deployed a number of methods based on the British Indian model. However, the new establishment engaged in ruthless malpractices and exploitation of the subaltern peasants and cattle-raisers, thereby dispossessing the Lambadas of their cattle wealth. The Lambadas' cattle were deliberately targeted because of their nomadic lifestyle, which was another important concern of the state. This led to a marked decline in cattle-raising amongst the Lambadas. Indeed, in

183 *Report on the Administration of His Highness the Nizam's Dominions for the Year 1339F* (1929–1930) (Hyderabad-Deccan: Government Central Press, 1933), 60.

184 APSA, NRAD, Inst. 37, List 3, S. no. 117, File no. R2/d16/1924, 5.

the 1931 census, only 6.9 per cent of them were returned as being in this occupational category.[185] The dispossessed Lambadas either resorted to dacoity or turned to agriculture for their livelihood. We shall examine these developments in the next two chapters.

185 *Census of India 1931 Vol. XXII, H.E.H. the Nizam's Dominions (Hyderabad State)* (Hyderabad-Dn.: The Government Central Press, 1933), part I, 184.

3

'Delinquent Subjects'

Dacoity and the Creation of a Surveillance Society

During the transition from a nomadic to a settled peasant life in the second half of the nineteenth century, a considerable number of Lambadas began resorting to dacoity. This became more widespread in the last quarter of the nineteenth century and first quarter of the twentieth. It was during this period, as outlined in the preceding chapters, that the Lambadas' long-standing food grain trade was destroyed. Those who had subsequently taken to cattle raising and agriculture were severely hampered by various state initiatives. This was compounded by the succession of severe famines that hit the state in that period. In desperation, some Lambadas, along with members of other subaltern communities, took to dacoity.

Dacoity was defined under British Indian law as a group robbery by five or more persons.[1] When dacoity was seen to be a threat to civil society and the state, the authorities deployed a variety of methods to put down, control, punish and reform the dacoits, many of whom were considered to belong to 'criminal tribes/communities.' Important in this respect was the creation of a body of anthropological knowledge about the 'criminal' communities, as it helped the state to separate supposedly 'delinquent' from 'honest' subjects. In turn, it conferred a specific social identity upon such

1 Arnold, 'Dacoity and Rural Crime', 143.

groups, and thereby socially stigmatised them.[2] The creation of a surveillance society served colonial ends. The Criminal Tribes Act (CTA) of 1871 provided for those designated as such to be registered with local police stations, confined to specific villages, fined and punished, and put in reformatories. Groups that suffered such a fate found it hard thereafter to earn an honest livelihood, so that they were even more likely to commit dacoity. Itinerant Lambadas who were so confined were particularly hard hit. Although the CTA was framed with the intention of transforming the delinquents into honest subjects, its implementation led to the creation of a huge body of so-called criminals in colonial India. As David Arnold puts it, 'despite the government's claims to the contrary, the way in which the Act operated was "punitive" rather than "preventive"'.[3] Attaching a criminal stigma to a community, draconian legal practices and strict surveillance were basically colonial inventions. The deployment of these practices created a vicious circle from which a criminal could not escape once he was caught in it. As we shall shortly see, the Lambadas' dacoities began largely during famines, and they were perpetuated because of the state's cruel practices of detention and surveillance.

From the 1850s, the British Indian government forced the Nizam's government to implement the colonial methods of classification, surveillance and policing of criminal communities. Hyderabad State was seen as particularly dacoit-prone because of its geographical setting and the complexity of the state's political practices. It was a land of forests and hills, and the British considered it an ideal cover for criminals. The Lambadas of Warangal, Nalgonda, Medak and Karimnagar, who were considered the most notorious dacoits in the state, inhabited the forests of these areas, and it was said that after committing the robberies they would hide in the forests. They would not appear until it was time for the next offence. It became

2 Criminal Tribes were enumerated as a separate social group from the 1911 census. See Y. C. Simhadri, *The Ex-criminal Tribes of India* (New Delhi: National Publishing House, 1979), 8.

3 David Arnold, *Police Power and Colonial Rule: Madras, 1859–1947* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1986), 146.

very difficult for the police to track them down.[4] Additionally, the British officials responsible for containing dacoity in territories adjoining Hyderabad claimed that the complex division of power in the state aided and abetted these offenders. There were fourteen *samasthandars* and 1,167 jagirdars in the state, of whom twenty-three enjoyed police and judicial powers in their respective territories. Although the superintendent of police of each district was supposed to have supervisory powers over the police who were maintained by these samasthandars and jagirdars, in practice the latter saw this as a curb on their power, and would do all they could to hamper the police if they tried to enter their territories to apprehend offenders.[5] Nor did they strictly implement the legislations passed by the Nizam or the British governments.[6] The British Indian government claimed that the dacoits would loot and rob in the British territories and flee to the Nizam's territories, particularly to the jagir territories. In this way, the state was seen as a haven for dacoits, and pressure was brought to bear on the Nizam's government to put a check on the dacoits.

In this chapter, we shall discuss how the colonial model of surveillance of criminal communities was deployed in Hyderabad State. We shall also examine the colonial state's construction of the Lambadas' dacoity and how famines that were associated with this phase of colonial rule helped to draw the Lambadas towards dacoity. Additionally, we shall look at how these detention and surveillance methods perpetuated their dacoit status.

THE COLONIAL CONSTRUCTION OF LAMBADA CRIMINALITY

Recent studies have brought out how from the start the colonial state understood dacoity in terms of the caste system, being supposedly a hereditary occupation of particular castes passed on

4 *Report on the Administration of the District Police of H.E.H. the Nizam's Government for the Year 1338F* (1928–29) (Hyderabad-Dn.: Government Central Press, 1930), 32.

5 *Report of the Royal Commission on Jagir Administration and Reforms, H.E.H. the Nizam's Government 1356F* (1946–47) (Hyderabad-Dn., 1947), 3.

6 Ibid., 50.

for generations or centuries.[7] As Sanjay Nigam says, the colonial definition of dacoity was framed in terms of caste, religion, and the supposedly fanatical, deceptive and cruel qualities of the subject race.[8] Inden has shown us how the Orientalist imagined India by extracting from the rhetoric of Hindu classical text. In this case the Orientalists deployed texts that associated each caste or community with particular social traits. These stereotypical traits were then reproduced as sociological facts in colonial administrative reports.[9] The Hindu religious texts broadly classified Indian *jatis* (castes) as pure and impure on the basis of occupation, and ascribed honesty and dishonesty accordingly. It is on the basis of these assumptions that many jatis associated with supposedly impure occupations or without any traditional occupation and leading nomadic lives were declared as 'criminal tribes and castes' by the colonial state. Even the department that was created to curb dacoity was named the Department of Thagi and Dakaiti. The word 'thug' is derived from the Hindi word *thugna*, which means 'to deceive'.[10] Thus, stereotypical notions about the thugs, the *dhartoora* (poisoners) and the *budhuks* (criminals) were derived from the Indian notion of 'otherness'. The phenomenon of thugi was viewed by the colonial authority as characteristically Indian, a practice sanctioned and perpetuated by Hinduism.[11]

Added to this mix were various European notions that linked a nomadic life with criminality. We have already discussed this in chapter 3. It has been pointed out in some recent studies how the ideology of the colonial state on dacoity was an echo of the European concept of the 'dangerous class'. Important in this respect was Lombroso's theory of the 'born criminal,' that rested on a belief

7 Radhika Singha has shown that a move towards criminalisation of communities was started in 1772 by Warren Hastings—that is to say well before William Sleeman who prepared a detailed list of criminal tribes in India in the 1830s. See her '"Providential" Circumstances: The Thuggee Campaign of the 1830s and Legal Innovation', *Modern Asian Studies* 27, no. 1, February 1993, 85.

8 Sanjay Nigam, 'Disciplining and policing the 'criminals by birth', Part 1: The making of a colonial stereotype"—"The criminal tribes and castes of North India', *The Indian Economic and Social History Review* 27, no. 2, 1990, 136.

9 Inden, *Imagining India*, 49.

10 Simhadri, *The Ex-Criminal*, 3.

11 Nigam, 'Disciplining and policing', Part 1, 134.

in criminality as an innate biological and heritable trait. Building on Lombroso's work, Bertillon developed an anthropometric system that claimed to be able to identify criminality on the basis of physical measurements. Such theories and practices provided a scientific veneer for the idea of the 'criminal tribe,' which further legitimised the punitive measures taken against groups that were already generally marginalized.[12]

In the course of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, the colonial state became increasingly fixated on delineating and identifying India's various racial and ethnic groups. George Campbell, Lieutenant Governor of Bengal, remarked in 1866 that 'this country, in a far greater degree than any other in the world, offers an unlimited field for ethnological observation and enquiry, and presents an infinity of varieties of almost every one of the great divisions of the human race.'[13] These ethnological studies, often deploying anthropometric methods and practices, largely focused on the physical and cultural peculiarities that were entrenched in India's diverse demography. This project was sponsored by the state in the main. It was an established practice that whenever any gang committed a theft or dacoity, the colonial state would immediately call for a study of that gang. If it were found that the gang had no specific occupation or fixed residence, it would be notified as a criminal tribe or caste under the CTA. The colonial state went on to publish details about the group and circulate the material among all the provincial governments and princely states. The colonial state thus created a body of knowledge regarding the criminal communities throughout the subcontinent.

In addition to the anthropological studies, census reports and gazetteers were another cherished achievement of the Indian colonial state. Together, these provided, for the bureaucracy, knowledge of the racial and morphological character of each community. These studies were produced and reproduced throughout the colonial period in various forms. In this process, many lower-caste Hindus

12 Chandak Sengoopta in his recent work has brought out how these practices were examined and established in colonial India in identifying and stigmatizing criminal bodies. See his *Imprint of the Raj: How fingerprinting was born in Colonial India* (London: Macmillan, 2003), 10–20.

13 Cited by Sengoopta, ibid., 42.

and *adivasi* communities were marked as criminal, as they were considered the oldest races and with no specific occupations and/or a permanent shelter. Every province and state police department was equipped with a huge stack of such ethnographic notes.[14]

Interestingly, many police officers also began to carry out their own ethnographic studies of criminal communities. These studies not only outlined the morphological traits of each community but also the methods and tools employed by it during a dacoity. As particular modes of robbery were attributed to each community, this was seen to help police identify a group responsible for an unsolved crime.[15] They even went to the extent of claiming that dacoity was a product of a social system that condemned particular groups to perpetual marginality. As stated in one police journal:

> In India hereditary criminal means a member of tribes and castes or sub-castes addicted for generation, perhaps centuries, to some form of crimes, in which their children are trained about from infancy. Many of them became criminals because they were prevented by the Hindu caste system from holding any occupation conducive to self-respect or earning an honest living.[16]

Conveniently, this placed the blame for criminality on Hindu practices rather than on the dislocations brought about by colonial rule. Lets us now go on to see how all of the above were applied in the case of Hyderabad State and its Lambada subjects.

14 Dirks, *Castes of Mind*, 43–60; Skariya, *Hybrid Histories*, 197–99.

15 See, Frederick S. Mullaly, *Notes on Criminal Classes of the Madras Presidency* (Madras: Superintendent Government Press, 1892); M. Paupa Rao Naidu, *The Criminal Tribes of India* (Madras: Higginbotham, 1905); E. J. Gunthorpe, *Notes on Criminal Tribes Residing in, or Frequenting, the Bombay Presidency, Berar and the Central Provinces* (Bombay: The Times of India Steam Press, 1882); M. Kennedy, *Notes on Criminal Classes in the Bombay Presidency with Appendices Regarding some Foreign Criminals who Occasionally Visit the Presidency Including Hints on the Detection of Counterfeit Coins with Illustrations* (Bombay, 1908); M. A. Ghani, *Notes on the Criminal Tribes of the Madras Presidency* (Madras: Thompson and Co. Minerva Press, 1915); M. Paupa Rao Naidu, *The Criminal Tribes of India, Series No. I, The History of Railway Thieves with Illustration and Hints on Detection* (Madras: Higginbotham, 1915).

16 IOL Indian Police Collection, Mss Eur, F.161/158, pre-1947, 3.

In 1851, the British Indian Government directed the Resident at Hyderabad to find out whether any specific caste or community was committing dacoity. After seeking information from the Nizam's government, the Resident replied that people of all castes and religions committed dacoities and that, as there were no scientific studies on the subject, it was difficult to attribute a caste or religious basis to such activities. He added, however, that those who did not earn an honest livelihood mostly committed dacoities and he was unsure as to whether they did it on an occasional or regular basis. Unable to attribute any particular caste name, he settled for merely calling them professional dacoits.[17] At that time, therefore, the colonial mode of classifying criminality by caste did not prevail in Hyderabad state.

This situation was not to last. The Lambadas were scattered throughout India and some, as was the case with many such communities, were known to commit petty thefts and occasional robberies. A handful of studies, as mentioned above, were done on the Lambadas of British India and they were then brought under the provisions of the CTA. In all these studies, their cultural traits were marked as martial; they were seen to descend from an ancient race and possess a nomadic, predatory past, worshipping aggressive personalities and symbols; these characteristics were enumerated in the CTA of 1871. These traits were enough for the colonial state to brand them as a notorious criminal community. The first study on the Lambadas of Hyderabad State, commissioned by the British Indian government, was by Briggs in 1813.[18] A thorough study of criminal communities was carried out in the state in 1891 by Colonel Ludlow.[19] A similar study was carried out subsequently by a state police official called Hussein Mir Vilayat Saheb.[20] These investigations magnified the supposed menace of Lambada dacoity and eventually influenced and prompted the enactment of

17 INA, HRR, Vol. 491, 1782–1888, 230–32.

18 John Briggs, 'Account of the Origin', 170-197; an ethnological study on the Lambadas of the Hyderabad State was also done in 1867 by Balfour; see his *On the Ethnology of Hyderabad*, 1–13.

19 APSA, NJD, Inst. 24, List 1, S. no. 144, File no. H2/a5/1897, 151–61.

20 Hussein Mir Vilayat Saheb, *Kitab-e-Halaat: Iqwan Jirayam-Pesha Mulk Sarkar-e-Ale* (Urdu: Contemporary Book on Criminal Communities in Hyderabad) (Hyderabad-Dn.: Government Press, 1917).

the special Act in the state. Although only a few Lambada gangs committed dacoities, mainly during times of famine and drought, the whole community was stigmatised.

These observers constructed a supposed 'predatory' past for the Lambadas. We have seen in chapter 2 how when the Mughal, British and Nizam armies employed the Lambadas as grain and baggage transporters, they took part in plundering the spoils of war along with the others. Wartime plundering was a common practice throughout history. Arthur Wellesley's correspondence during the period of the Mysore and Maratha Wars shows how the army, especially the Nizam's army, ruthlessly plundered the villages of prosperous regions.[21] As the Lambadas were largely attached to the Nizam's army, it prompted the government to brand them as a predatory community, and it was sufficient reason to declare them a criminal tribe. It is worth noting a few descriptions of their depredations here. Briggs, whose study was the first of this nature, noted that:

> The grant that they (Lambadas) pretend to have received from Ourungzeeb, for the thatch of houses, the seizure of well drawn water, and plunder in the enemy's country, has furnished them with pretexts for their general predatory habits. Wherever they go in times of peace, they are the most cruel robbers on the highways; for they seldom spare the life if any resistance is made, or there is the slightest chance of discovery; while in times of war it has been frequently found necessary to defend the villages of our own and the enemy's country on the flanks, by protecting them with safeguards.[22]

Francis Buchanan also describes the community somewhat similarly:

> The chief plunderers were the rabble belonging to the *Nizam*, and the *Brinjaries*, who are most ferocious ruffians, that not only plunder, but wantonly murder, every defenceless person that comes in their way. ... No exertions of our officers could prevent the *Brinjaries* from plundering, not only the enemy, but the villages belonging to the company that were in the neighbourhood of their route.[23]

21 *The Mysore Letters and Dispatches*, 84–85.

22 Briggs, 'Account of the Origin', 190.

23 Buchanan, *Journey from Madras*, II: 182.

In this way, the Lambadas were branded as hereditary plunderers.

Other morphological traits of the community that were considered to make them prone to dacoity were their muscularity and martial lineage. Many lower castes and adivasi communities such as Meenas, Bhils and Banjaras/Lambadas claimed Rajput (martial) status in the early period of the colonial rule in order to get revenue collection positions or to find a higher place in the caste-Hindu society.[24] These trends continued well into the twentieth century. In this way many communities, particularly in North Western Provinces, were brought under the CTA.[25] The Lambadas were generally seen by the colonial state as a martial race because of their predatory activities, morphological traits, and claim to Rajput ancestry. Frederick S. Mullaly portrayed them as a martial and muscular community, as expressed in the mythical story of their origin (Mota-Mola story), in which they claim Rajput status and their origin from Lord Sri Krishna. He also sketched out their present position in the social ladder that they were inferior to the Kapus (dominant peasant caste) and superior to the Yanadis and Erukalas (other nomadic tribes).[26] As they were also hunters and moved with arms such as axes, swords, knives and arrows, etc., it was easy to project them as a martial community. We have seen in chapter 3 that the nomadic way was hardly tolerated by the colonial state, and most wandering communities were branded 'criminal'.[27] Ludlow concluded that all wandering communities were dangerous criminals, especially the Lambadas who led an unsettled life.[28] It

24 Malcolm observed that many lower castes and adivasi communities claimed Rajput status in Maratha regions in order to get revenue collection positions. See his *A Memoir of Central India*, 100.

25 *A Hand Book of the Criminal Tribes of the Punjab* (Lahore: Punjab Government Press, 1912), 107.

26 Mullaly, *Notes on Criminal Classes*, 30.

27 Meena Radhakrishna has shown how the itinerant communities were branded with a criminal stigma in the Madras Presidency; see her 'The Criminal Tribes Act in Madras Presidency: Implication for itinerant trading communities', *The Indian Economic and Social History Review* 23, no. 3, 1989, 269–93.

28 APSA, NJD, Inst. 18, List 3, S. no. 57, File no. H3/a1/1892, 81; APSA, NJD, Inst. 24, List 1, S. no.114, File no. H2/a5/1897, 151.

was against this backdrop that they were targeted more aggressively than the others.

An orientalist depiction of Banjaras

ILLUSTRATION 3: In April 1865, the French Orientalist, Louis Rousselet, met a caravan of 'Brinjarees' in central India. He described their 'picturesque' community, and described its exotic 'customs,' which included the supposed abduction of male children, the 'necromancy' of their women, and their 'primitive' marriage ceremonies, and stated that they were descended from 'that wandering race which, under the name of Bohemians and Zingaris, have spread themselves all over Europe.' In other words, they were, in his view, related to the gypsies of Europe. This illustration depicts them as an exotic, wild and martial Oriental tribe. The style of dress of the man and woman are similar to those depicted for the Lambadas of Hyderabad state at that time. Louis Rousselet, *India & its Native Princes*, 2nd English edn. (London: Bickers and Son, 1882), 419–20.

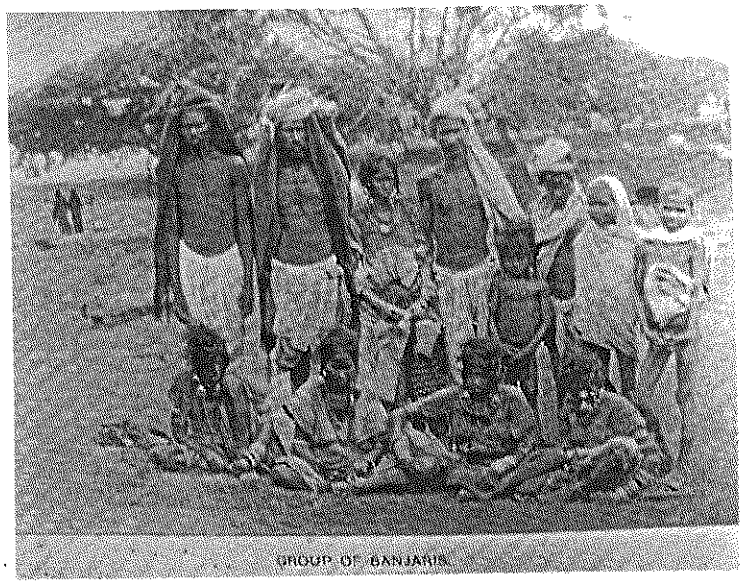


ILLUSTRATION 4: A very different depiction of the Lambadas of Hyderabad State in a British work of the late nineteenth century. Here, they appear as an impoverished, famine-stricken community. From Campbell, *Glimpses of the Nizam's Dominions*, 152.

Occupation was another criterion marking out the 'criminal tribe.' As was discussed earlier, much colonial anthropological investigation believed caste to be the essence of Indian civilisation. For colonial administrators and ethnographers, caste was occupation and occupation was caste.[29] It was this mindset that prompted the colonial state to impute dacoity to some communities just as occupations such as skilled trades were attributed to others. This notion was embedded in the CTA of 1871:

> We all know that traders go by castes in India; a family of carpenters now will be a family of carpenters a century or five centuries hence, if they last so long, so will grain dealers, blacksmiths, leather makers and every other known trade. A carpenter cannot drop his tools and become a *bunniah* or a *lohar* or anything else. The only means of subsistence open to him other than the trade to which he is born is

29 Nigam, 'Disciplining and Policing', Part 1, 135.

> agriculture, but in ninety-nine cases out of a hundred if he is born a carpenter he will live and die a carpenter.[30]

Thus, dacoity was seen by the colonial state as a hereditary practice among certain communities of India. With regard to the Lambadas, it was observed that dacoity was like any other trade handed down to them by their forefathers and that they took pride in it. A Lambada man was not, it was said, worth his salt unless he had proven himself an expert thief; a Lambada women would not marry a man if he did not prove to be a successful robber.[31]

The religious practices of the community also contributed to constructing this edifice. It was the practice among the Lambadas to worship their ancestors. Meetu Bhukya of the ceded districts of Madras, a supposed freebooter of the nineteenth century, was worshiped by many Lambadas of both Madras and Hyderabad. The ethnographic note on the criminal classes states:

> There is a hut set apart in the camp and devoted to Meetu Bhukya, an old freebooter. No one may eat or drink in this hut. In front of it is a flagstaff to which a piece of white cloth is attached. By all criminals Meetu Bhukya is worshiped as a clever freebooter, but he is more thought of on the banks of Wardha River than to the west of it. When the white flag is seen, it means that Meetu Bhukya is worshiped in that camp. It should therefore be watched carefully at night when the *thanda* is suspected to be committing a crime.[32]

The oral literature of the community suggests, however, that Meetu Bhukya was a religious leader and never participated in dacoity. According to Lambada narrations, he lived at Thimmanagar thanda in Gutti-Ballary region of the ceded districts of Madras, and once rescued his thanda people when they were accused of a theft at Koppal in Raichur, using his mythical power. In fact, it is a usual custom in most adivasi societies to worship their beloved deities before embarking on any new venture. Hoisting a white flag was also a common practice. Among the Lambadas, the white flag celebrates

30 IOL, Indian Police Collection, Mss Eur, F.161/158, pre-1947, 3.

31 C. M. Edward, *The Criminal Tribes in India* (London: The Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in Foreign Parts, 1922), 3–6.

32 Lyall, *Gazetteer for the Haidarabad*, 199.

another religious personality also, Seva Bhaya.[33] Nevertheless, following colonial ethnographic practice, criminality was portrayed as part of a religious cult. It is noted in the colonial texts that the 'Indian mind is trained in religion from early life, and there is a need to understand the Indian from a religion angle.'[34] It was also observed that they committed dacoities to satisfy their gods.[35] The Lambadas who worshipped Meetu were branded as criminals and a tight surveillance was kept on their thandas.

The colonial state and colonial anthropologist thus systematically constructed a criminal identity for the Lambadas, in the process twisting observations of their practices to signify a cultural basis for their dacoity. It is not to suggest that the Lambadas were entirely innocent, for some did take part in dacoity, as we shall see below. Colonial observers stigmatised an entire community, however; and this had severe implications for both the guilty and innocent.

TOWARDS DACOITY

Dacoity was neither an inborn trait nor a hereditary practice in Lambada society. Rather, some Lambadas took to dacoity when colonial interventions destroyed their long-standing livelihood practices and threw them into perpetual impoverishment. In other words, the phenomenon of this sort of dacoity was a response to colonial rule. It would be appropriate here to quote the following popular saying:

> The Banjaras are honest and never steal. The Banjara's mother watches the season (for her son's return from his journeys), watches for the home-coming of a servant, a thief, a thug, and a Banjara.[36]

This saying was collected by Herbert Risley at the beginning of the twentieth century, but it probably belongs to the early nineteenth century or so, as the sentence describes the life of the

33 Ruplanaik, *Colourful Banjara*, 227.

34 Augustus Somerville, *Crime and Religious Beliefs in India* (Calcutta: Industry Press, 1929), ii.

35 The colonial authority may have conceived this idea from the Bhils' claim that they were 'Mahadev's thieves'. See Skaria, *Hybrid Histories*, 146.

36 Herbert Risley, *The People of India* (London: W. Thacker & Co., 1915), 318.

early nineteenth-century Lambada. As is evident from the saying, the Lambadas were never involved in dacoity, and caravan trade was their source of livelihood. The aged women folk who were left at the granaries used to watch over the grain-stores and await the return of their men. Their reputation changed when the sources of their traditional livelihood were destroyed. The Lambadas came to be seen as a notorious criminal community, particularly from the last quarter of the nineteenth century. Their name came to be synonymous with highway and grain robbery, and cattle lifting.[37]

In many recent studies, it is common to represent this phenomenon of dacoity as a primitive peasant rebellion or social banditry against state exploitation.[38] This framework was borrowed from Hobsbawm's claim that social banditry is a universal and virtually unchanging phenomenon that embodies a rather primitive form of organised social protest of peasants against oppression. According to Hobsbawm, this phenomenon of banditry was more widespread in many parts of the world during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, just like in Europe during the sixteenth and eighteenth centuries. He also separates those raiders from professional robbers.[39] Hobsbawm's claim regarding the universality of banditry and the possible separation of raiders from professional robbers has been sharply criticised by David Arnold. Arnold argues that it is difficult to find the Hobsbawm's model of social banditry in the colonial Indian context, as banditry is mixed up with the whole notion of criminal tribes and caste that was saturated with crude colonial sociology.[40]

One is also struck by Hobsbawm's depiction of banditry as a 'primitive' form of protest, where, in fact, most banditry found in colonial India was a reaction to and consequence of colonial rule. In this respect, banditry is certainly a 'modern' weapon as it was used against the modern state. When the colonial state was establishing its power in India in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, there was a growing trend of banditry across

37 APSA, NJD, Inst. 24, List 1, S. no. 144, File no. H2/a5/1897, 130.

38 For instance see George A. Floris, 'A Note on dacoits in India,' *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 4:4, July 1962, 467–477.

39 Hobsbwam, *Bandits*, 13–17, 19.

40 Arnold, 'Dacoity and Rural Crime', 141.

the country, mostly spearheaded by traditional local powers.[41] In south India, when the Nizam surrendered the coastal districts of the Andhra region to the British, many jagirdars and zamindars lost their powers under the British authority. These zamindars and jagirdars formed bonds with the local subaltern communities and began raids targeting the British authority, particularly in western parts of the Madras Presidency.[42] There were also, as mentioned in chapter 2, a few such incidences after the last Maratha War (1820s), in which local powers headed and sponsored banditry in the region in response to colonial encroachment. These raids and lootings were more political than economic in spirit. However, they were suppressed violently by the British colonial state and Hyderabad State.[43] As Arnold suggests, the whole treatment of social banditry in colonial India was profoundly influenced by the CTA and crude colonial anthropology, which successfully poisoned peoples' minds. As a result, the outlaws got sympathy from neither their own community nor the peasant society. In fact, outlaws or dacoits were socially boycotted even by their own communities. It was observed that a section of Lambadas of Warangal, Mahbubnagar and Nizamabad, who were established in agriculture, disliked living with their fellow thanda people who were involved in dacoity, and moved away to settle in other villages.[44] In this, they were probably trying to escape from the stigma of criminality and the wrath of the police. In this sense, it is difficult to find Hobsbawm's model of banditry in colonial India. Certainly banditry or dacoity in colonial India was articulated within a language of resistance and discontent against colonial exploitation, but it was fractured by the colonial detention and surveillance methods.

As we have been arguing, dacoity in Hyderabad became particularly rife due to the distressing situation caused by recurrent famines. Amartya Sen says that 'starvation is the characteristic of some people not having enough food to eat. It is not the characteristic of there being not enough food to eat.' Starvation, according to him, is largely the result of the failure of state entitlement for social

41 Ibid., 143.

42 IOR, Boaid's Collection, F/4/76, Vol.76, 1800–1801, 1665.

43 Burton, *History of the Hyderabad*, 75.

44 Saheb, *Kitab-é-Halaat*, 10.

security.[45] As we shall shortly see, although there was considerable food grain stored in the landlords' and sahukars' granaries in the state, people died for want of food. It was this situation that drew many starving subalterns towards dacoity. Arnold has showed us how dacoity was born from recurrent famines in the Madras Presidency.[46] Famine and drought were regular fixtures in the state during the nineteenth century and the first half of the twentieth.[47] The political rationalisation of state power along colonial lines from the early nineteenth century, as was seen in the case of the Lambadas in the preceding chapter, had thrown out millions from their long-standing occupations. The land tenure and revenue policies introduced from the middle of the nineteenth century led to intense land concentration and exploitative money-lending practices, due to which many subaltern peasants lost their land and had to live on wage labour. Aggressive deforestation also resulted in the frequent failure of the monsoon. Whenever the monsoons failed in the state the subaltern peasants had to face immense hardships, as theirs was a hand-to-mouth existence. Above all, the state responded to this distress with little compassion or energy.[48]

Hyderabad State was affected by famine of particular severity between 1891 and 1920. The immediate outcome was an abrupt increase in food grain prices. Grain prices increased sharply all over India, especially after 1898.[49] The average grain price in the state rose by 130 per cent between 1873 and 1907. In 1907, half a *seer* (500 grams) [a seer is equal to a kilogram] of grain sold for one rupee. The state was unable or unwilling to mitigate this state of affairs, which was also brought on by world economic conditions.[50] Astonishingly, when people were dying for want of food, huge

45 Amartya Sen, *Poverty and Famines: An essay on Entitlement and Deprivation* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1981), 1–8.

46 Arnold, 'Dacoity and Rural Crime', 141.

47 Hyderabad State was visited by serious famines in 1804, 1813, 1819, 1823, 1833, 1854, 1860, 1872, 1877, 1897, 1900, 1913, 1918–1921; see Mohiuddin Yar Jung Bahadur, *Report on the Famine in H.H the Nizam's Dominions for the Years 1330F–1331F* (1920–22) (Secunderabad: the Albion Press, 1922), 4.

48 Ibid.,4–6; Said Mahdi Ali, *Report on the History of the Famine*, 17–27; Dunlop, *Report on the Famine Relief*, 8; Mohamad Ali, *Report on the Famine Relief*, 10–22.

49 APSA, NRAD, Inst. 37, List 3, S. no. 100, File no. R3/b8/1914, 103.

50 Bahadur, *Report on the Famine*, 30.

stocks of food grain from the state were siphoned off to British India by unscrupulous landlords and sahukars. This naturally resulted in a great scarcity of food grain in the state.[51] The subaltern communities were seriously affected during all these famines. The Famine Report stated that the criminal tribes sold their children for food.[52] The Lambadas were the worst affected, for they had huge hordes of cattle and there was scanty grazing land. They had to feed their family and cattle. Further, their criminal stigma restricted their movement. Some of the Lambadas of Bhir, Mahbubnagar and Warangal districts migrated to British territories during the 1918–20 famines, but they were sent back on the pretext of their being criminals.[53] Thus the peasants and vulnerable communities of the famine-affected regions had recourse to little else besides committing dacoity for survival.[54]

The 1899–1900 famine was the most devastating of all in the state. There was great scarcity of food, especially in Cherial and Wardanapet in Warangal district and the Warangal talukas, though the neighbouring areas of Khammam and Madira and the adjoining British areas were unaffected. A thirty-three strong gang of Lambadas under Kewal Naik, whose headquarters were in the Lambada village of Tarlawatti that was within the jagir of Captain Ahmed Bux Khan, made a number of food grain raids on the richer villages of Warangal.[55] On 26 February1900, the Lambadas of Kotgir, Paigah Illaka of Sir Vikar-ul-Umra Bahdur, committed a dacoity at Nabipet and looted Khanappa Bakl's house. About twenty to twenty-five Lambadas, including two women, entered his house whilst others remained outside on guard. They were armed with guns, swords, *latis* (wooden staffs) and slings. The women of the house were stripped of all their ornaments and the gang stayed about two hours looting all they could find. They then went to the thana in the village, tied up two constables, and carried off a bayonet and several muskets.[56] In Nanded district, a Lambada gang attacked the house

51 Ibid., 8–13.

52 Ibid., 44.

53 Mohamad Ali, *Report on the Famine Relief*, 26.

54 Bahadur, *Report on the Famine*, 55.

55 *Report on the Administration of the District Police of H.E.H. the Nizam's Government for the Year 1309F* (1899–1900) (APSA, R-24), 86–8.

56 Ibid., 133.

of one Ramiah Komati (grain merchant) at Korta in Digloor taluka and looted a huge stock of grain.[57] A dacoity occurred at Korwar in Gulbarga taluka of Gulbarga district, in which a Lambada gang looted property belonging to a temple.[58] Cases of crimes against property increased in number between 1898 and 1900 from 7,939 to 11,382.[59]

In 1907, rain failure again created the conditions for dacoity. The *kharif* (June to November season) crops failed in Bhir, Parbhani, Nanded, Raichur, Bidar, Medak, Osmanabad, Mahbubnagar and Warangal. The *rabi* (December to March season) crop was also poor in Aurangabad, Nanded, Medak and Warangal. Cattle suffered from scarcity of fodder in many districts. Crimes increased throughout the state as a result. The police reports of the year observed that they were purely food grain raids and some sort of agrarian riots.[60] During famines, looting of food grains was thus a common phenomenon. This looting was not confined to the Lambadas; it was carried out by many other castes and tribes, and even poor members of the Hindu dominant castes.[61] Most reported cases involved petty grain theft. Seventy-two out of 228 cases reported in Indur taluka were of property valued from two annas to Rs 200, with only fifteen cases involving thefts of more than Rs 300 in value.[62]

The First World War was one of the most difficult periods in the history of Hyderabad State. There was a sharp increase in grain prices throughout the world owing to the withdrawal of the German mercantile navy from the sea, and the requisition of a large part of the English mercantile navy for transporting troops and war munitions.[63] The demand for food grains in other parts of the world resulted in most of its being exported from the state.

57 Ibid., 83.

58 Ibid., 103.

59 Ibid., 31.

60 *Report on the Administration of the District Police of H.E.H. the Nizam's Government for the Year1317F* (1907–8) (Hyderabad-Deccan: Central Jail Press, 1909), 1–2.

61 *Report on the Administration of the District Police of H.E.H. the Nizam's Government for the Year 1314F* (1904–5) (Hyderabad-Dn.: A. Venoogopaul Pillai & Sons, 1907), 15.

62 *Report on the Administration of the District Police 1309F* (1899–1900), 133.

63 APSA, NRAD, Inst. 37, List 3, S. no. 100, File no. R3/b8/1914, 112.

The situation, compounded with famines, became unbearable. In 1913, Aurangabad and Bhir were severely affected by famine. Warangal, Karimnagar, Medak, Nalgonda and Mahbubnagar were also famine-stricken during 1918–19 and, in 1920, the whole of the Telangana region was caught in its grip. Dacoities once again became common.[64] The government made fitful efforts to overcome the situation. In 1919, public works worth Rs 365,750 were initiated, targeting 832,537 labour beneficiaries. A *takavi* (crop) loan of Rs 2,238,173 was also distributed to peasants for digging wells and buying fodder. But these efforts did not alleviate the situation, and the distressed continued to rob and loot for food.[65] As shown in Table 4, there was a steep increase in the crime rate during this period. The number of criminal cases increased from 3,981 to 6,227 between 1916 and 1921.

Table 4: Number of criminal cases during the famine years (1916–21)

Years	Murders	Dacoity	Robbery	House breaking	Theft	Cattle theft	Total
1326F (1916–17)	166	52	129	1969	1219	446	3981
1327F (1917–18)	233	168	207	2466	1665	625	5364
1328F (1918–19)	279	286	347	2720	1843	1293	6768
1329F (1919–20)	265	157	246	1950	1461	943	5022
1330F (1920–21)	266	312	313	2610	1758	968	6227

Source: Mohamad Ali, *Report on the Famine Relief*, 27.

Despite the treatment meted out to criminal communities by local authorities under the CTA, dacoities and other criminal activities continued even when there was a good harvest. The members of the communities notified under the Act were registered and imprisoned in massive numbers during the famine. After their release from the jail, they were kept under the surveillance of the local village officials and the police, who treated criminal communities harshly. Their members were harboured by local officials and dominant peasant castes and induced to indulge in dacoity, from which the latter appropriated big shares. In Raichur, a gang of thirty-eight was booked under the Act and kept under the custody and surveillance of

64 Bahadur, *Report on the Famine*, 4.

65 Ibid., 44.

local officials. A watandar of Manwi taluka harboured many of them and instigated them to commit robberies in the region. Similarly, *jamadars* (head-constable) Hasan Mohi-ud-din and Venkat Singh and three constables were involved in such cases in the taluka.[66] Many officials were prosecuted for assisting criminals in the state. Some watandars in Adilabad encouraged offenders and prosecuted those who refused to comply. They assisted two notorious dacoits of Berar called Datia and Mohania. In Parbhani, the patel and patwari of Seoni were prosecuted for assisting a criminal named Deoba.[67] From the above facts it is clear that such criminality surfaced during the famines and was connived at and encouraged by corrupt officials who were able to manipulate the CTA to their advantage.

POLICING CRIMINAL GANGS

In colonial India, 'criminal' communities were policed through various methods: legal, coercive, and reformatory. More importantly, unlike in modern Western states, the colonial state deployed these methods not only through the regular police force but also through village authorities, the dominant castes and landlords.[68] These practices were more apparent in Hyderabad state where a considerable amount of state power continued to lie in the hands of such local groups up until the end of the Nizam's rule. These local power holders had limitless opportunity to exploit the CTA to their own advantage. This in turn encouraged criminal activity further.

No serious need was felt to police dacoits in Hyderabad state before the last quarter of the nineteenth century. Even when dacoits were captured, they were released without any serious punishment.[69] This was because dacoity was generally seen by the state as a political rather than a criminal act. Historically, it represented a form of *chout* (tax) collected by groups such as the Marathas and adivasi chiefs. It was more prevalent in Udaipur, Gujarat, Khandesh and the Nizam's territories in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, when power was being centralised in their territories. Skaria shows us how the Bhil's raids in western India at this time constituted a demand

66 *Report on the Administration of the District Police 1314F* (1904–5), 52.
67 *Ibid., 1317F* (1907–8), 3.
68 Arnold, *Police Power*, 102–103.
69 IOR, Board's Records, F/4/1494, 1834 – 35, 58700: 83.

for their *haks/giras* (share), symbolising their right to collect an amount as a due from a village. This tax collection was crucial to their exercise of political authority. He says the 'raids could be about demonstrating a raja's authority, or responding appropriately to challenges to that authority.'[70] Nevertheless, as stated above, these activities were judged to be criminal acts by the colonial state, with some such groups being branded as criminal tribes and reined in under the CTA.

From the 1860s onwards, the British brought great pressure to bear on the Nizam to strengthen and reinforce his police force. Before 1866, there was no regular policing system in Hyderabad. The state was largely dependent on the military and revenue officials to discharge police duties, particularly village officials. The system bred considerable fraud and corruption.[71] Salar Jung tried to organise the police force on modern lines between 1866 and 1869. When administrative districts were established throughout the state on the British model in 1866, a regular police force was raised and placed under the revenue authority. In 1869, a special *Sadr-ul-Maham* (minister for police) was appointed with full powers over the police force. A year later, *Sadr Mohtamims* were appointed, one for each division.[72] Nevertheless, this establishment did not satisfy the British Indian government. The dacoits found shelter in the Nizam's territories and carried out their raids from there.[73] So the British Indian Government put greater pressure on the Nizam's government to tighten policing and curb dacoity in the state. This resulted in the police system being reorganised in 1884 according to the British Indian model, with an Inspector General of District Police taking control of the department. The district police were placed under the First Talukdar (corresponding to district collector in British India), and the District Police Superintendent was made his executive deputy. Subsequently, a state-level detective branch

70 Skariyas, *Hybrid Histories*, 124–130.
71 Syed Mahdi Ali, *Hyderabad Affairs*, VI: 50.
72 *Imperial Gazetteers Hyderabad*, 70.
73 *Report on the Administration of His Highness the Nizam's Dominions 1294F* (1884–85), 78.

was also organised under an officer deputed from the Berar force, and the city police was kept separate from it.[74]

As it was, the British Indian Government virtually controlled the police administration in the state. Many British police officers were imported from British India to train police officers at the Hyderabad Police Training School, and they held top posts in the department.[75] Especially the Thagi and Dakaiti Department of the state created in 1884 was totally controlled and monitored by the Central Thagi and Dakaiti Department of British India at Simla through the Hyderabad Resident. The main objectives of the central department were to assist the native states in suppressing dacoity, implement measures for the registration and settlement of criminal tribes, and supervise, organise and carry out measures for the recognition, control, extradition, and punishment of wandering criminals in the native states. A post of Assistant General Superintendent was created in the central department to supervise policing of dacoity in the state.[76] He would tour the districts for three months in a year and keep the central department informed about developments. He toured in a grand style, being accompanied by two elephants, ten camels and an escort of fifteen *sawars* (police) at the Nizam's cost.[77] The General Superintendent also visited the state annually.[78] The Nizam's government had to submit annual reports on the functioning of the Thagi and Dakaiti Department to the central department.[79] In this way, the British were able to keep a close surveillance on the policing of dacoity in the state.

The policing of dacoits in India was governed by the CTA. The Lambadas of British India were brought under the Act, but those of Hyderabad State did not initially come under its purview. The British government then forced the Nizam's government to promulgate a separate Act for the state. Although the state could

74 *Imperial Gazetteers Hyderabad*, 70.

75 For instance, Col. Ludlow, Mr Ballard, A. C. Hankin, and E. J. Stephenson held the position of Inspector General of Police of the state and were instrumental in establishing there a police system on the British Indian model.

76 *Rules for the Working of the Thagi and Dakaiti Department* (Simla: The Government Central Press, 1894), 1.

77 APSA, NJD, Inst. 17, List 7, S. no. 46, File no. H18/a30/1894, 2.

78 Ibid., S. no. 56, File no. H18/e27/1895, 3.

79 APSA, NJD, Inst. 37, List 1, S. no. 100, File no. A5/b19/1887, 5.

not pass it immediately, a regulation was promulgated called the Lambada *Dustur-ul-Amal*.[80] This was targeted at the Lambadas of the state. Almost all the measures found in the CTA were inserted in this regulation.[81] It helped not only the state to curb dacoity, but also the British Indian government to trace out Lambadas hiding in the Nizam's territories. This resulted in the Lambadas being treated harshly, with false cases often being started against them.[82] To cite a case of 1901, the Lambadas of Bhautnur (Nizam subjects) were accused of committing dacoity in Bellary district by the British Indian police. A British Indian police party raided their thanda and took away their property, alleging that it was stolen. They also arrested sixteen Lambadas. Upon further enquiry by the Nizam's police, it was discovered that they were innocent and poor people living a hand-to-mouth existence and were arrested merely on suspicion. Yet, the British police accused and branded them as criminal characters.[83]

In fact before the enactment of the special CTA in the state, the dacoits were checked and controlled through the Extradition Act. The British Indian Government had an arrangement with the Nizam's Government to extradite foreign criminals hiding in its territory. In this regard, a treaty was also executed between the Nizam and the British in 1867. After the enactment of the CTA in 1871, this treaty was further strengthened with the introduction of the Extradition Act of 1879. According to this law, when an offence was committed or supposed to have been committed in any state against the law of such a state by a person who was not a European or British subject, and such person escaped into or lived in British India, then the political agent for such a state could issue a warrant for his arrest and deliver it to the place where he was located and to the person named in the warrant.[84] To enforce this network effectively even in

80 It is not certain when this regulation was promulgated but it appears in government records from the early 1880s.

81 APSA, NJD, Inst. 17, List 7, S. no. 4, File no. H18/e9/1888, 1; *Report on the Administration of the District Police 1309F* (1899–1900), 96.

82 APSA, NJD, Inst. 17, List 7, S. no. 100, File no. H18/c42/1901, 10; APSA, NJD, Inst. 18, List 4, S. no. 1, File no. H18/a13/1888, 9.

83 APSA, NJD, Inst. 17, List 7, S. no. 100, File no. H18/c42/1901, 10, 17.

84 Maneksha Dinsha, *The Law of Extradition between H.H. the Nizam's Dominion and British India* (Madras: Lawrence Asylum Press, 1898), 36.

the jagir territories, the Nizam's government enacted another piece of legislation in 1906 called the Hyderabad Extradition Act.[85] These Acts not only helped to ensure that wanted offenders surrendered to the respective authorities, but they also aided the apprehension of suspected persons or gangs in any part of India. There were many instances in which the Lambadas were harassed since their work involved moving between two territories (we have discussed this point in the preceding chapters).[86] Many Lambadas crossing from the British into the Nizam's territories were policed, registered and sent back, and vice versa.[87]

From the last decade of the nineteenth century, dacoity was, as we have found, widely prevalent in the state as the economic position of many subaltern communities deteriorated rapidly. In the face of this new phenomenon, both governments had great difficulty in handling the situation, especially in the border areas, where the criminals were operating from the Nizam's territories.[88] The jagirs in particular were considered to be a safe haven for the dacoits. The Yerragollawars (another criminal tribe), who were British subjects and accused in many dacoity cases in the Madras Presidency, moved into the state due to the rigorous surveillance in the British territories. They were concentrated mainly in the Madargi and Chincholi areas in the Paigah estate of Sir Khurshed Jha of Bidar and they had been raiding the adjacent areas.[89] The Police Administration Report of 1899 observed that 'the Jagir of Peddapally belonging to Raja Sher Bahadur, and Jungdeopally belonging to Nabi Ali Khan Sahib, are nothing more or less than refuges for the *dakaits*, robbers and *badmashes* of this district (Karimnagar).'[90]

To overcome this difficulty, the British Government once again persuaded the Nizam to promulgate a separate act on the lines of the CTA of 1871 of British India, to bring all the criminal communities of

85 *The Hyderabad Extradition Act No. II of 1306F* (1896–7) (Hyderabad-Dn.: Government Press, 1908), 6.

86 APSA, NJD, Inst. 18, List 3, S. no. 136, File no. H2/b90/1897, 7–9.

87 Ibid., S. no. 137, File no. H2/a5/1897, 6.

88 Ibid., S. no. 44, File no. H2/b7/1892, 1–9.

89 *Report on the Administration of the District Police of H.E.H. the Nizam's Government for the Year 1313F* (1903–4) (Hyderabad-Dn.: A. Venoogopaul Pillai & Sons, 1905), 15.

90 *Report on the Administration of the District Police 1309F* (1899–1900), 96.

Hyderabad State under the act. Indeed there was enormous pressure on the Nizam to pass this act at the earliest.[91] Ludlow, who was the architect of the CTA, did a study of the criminal communities of the state for five years between 1887 and 1891 and submitted a report, to which he added a glossary of criminal castes and tribes to be notified under the act. He also suggested measures to be taken to curb dacoity in the state. Based on this report and the existing acts and practices on this subject in British India, a bill was prepared and considered by the select committee and sent for the Legislative Council's approval in December 1896.[92] The bill was passed into law as the Criminal Tribes Act No. 2 of 1307F (1897–98).[93]

This Act was nothing but a copy of the British Indian CTA of 1871, and it initiated systematic policing of criminal communities in the state. The third article of the Act pronounced that 'if the Inspector General of Police, or any *Subedar* has reason to believe that any tribe, gang, or class of persons, is addicted to the systematic commission of non-bailable offences and has no fixed place of residence and lawful occupation, he may submit a written report of the case to the Government, and may request permission to declare such tribe, gang, or class to be criminal.'[94] Thus many communities, including the Lambadas, who had no fixed occupation or permanent residence were declared criminal tribes and forced to register themselves as criminals.[95] This resulted in the creation of a massive number of declared criminal communities in the state. Even minor offences or petty crimes committed during a difficult period were not condoned and were brought under the purview of this draconian Act. For instance, one Bhagya Lambada of Sailu village of Parbhani was booked under this Act as a member of a criminal tribe. All he was guilty of was stealing five seers of food

91 APSA, NJD, Inst. 18, List 3, S. no. 57, File no. H3/a1/1892, 213.

92 APSA, NJD, Inst. 24, List 1, S. no. 114, File no. H2/a5/1897, 151–61.

93 APSA, NJD, Inst. 18, List. 3, S. no. 137, File no. H2/a5/1897, 24–31.

94 Ibid., 29, 31.

95 The main castes and tribes declared 'criminal' under the Act were: Yerkallas, Kaikaries, Wadders, Lambadas, Uchlas, Pardies, Domars, Korchas, Pathroors, Mang Garories, Poosalwars, Balsunthoors, Pichkuntawars, Kamakapwars, Panjars, Bhats, Lolis, Arabs, Chuperbunds, Algiries. All these communities had lost their long-standing occupations during the colonial period. See *Report on the Administration of the District Police 1317F* (1907–8), 25.

grain during the severe famine of 1918.[96] This would have normally been a bailable offence, yet the community from which he hailed ensured that he was booked under the Act.

The CTA thus created 'criminality' in those to whom it was applied. Article X of the Act says 'the *Muhtamim* (Superintendent of police of the district) shall publish a notice in the place where the register is to be made, as well as in other proper places, calling upon all the members of such tribe, gang, or class, or of such portion thereof as is directed to be registered, to appear, at a time and place therein specified, before the police Muhtamim, or the other officer appointed by the Inspector General of Police, and to give them such information as may be necessary to enable them to make the register.'[97] It was indeed suicidal to register oneself as a criminal. This clause alone manufactured numerous criminals. The official procedure severely restricted the movement of the criminal communities and therefore their sources of livelihood. The police and village authority would imprison them, either on charges of petty theft or simply for being members of a criminal community. After their release, they often were left with nothing to eat as their movements were totally curtailed and they were not allowed to travel without the permission of the police. The registered criminals as well as those released from the prison had to report to the village headman or to the police at fixed intervals, which usually was at inconvenient hours like 11.00 p.m. and 3.00 a.m. So, even if someone needed to go to another village, he had to secure a pass stating full particulars of his destination, and upon reaching there he again had to report to the authorities of that place. A breach of this rule would invite punishment under the Act by imprisonment up to three years or a fine of Rs 500.[98] As discussed in the preceding chapters, some Lambadas led nomadic lives well into the twentieth century to earn their livelihood—selling salt, attending cattle fairs or grazing cattle. Yet the CTA considered nomadic life as a source of dacoity and banned it. This scuttled their opportunity to earn an honest living and pushed them in many cases to depending on dacoity.

96 APSA, NJD, Inst. 24, List 1, S. no. 221, File no. H4/c1641/1919, 43.

97 APSA, NJD, Inst. 18, List 3, S. no. 137, File no. H2/a5/1897. 25–28.

98 Ibid., 33; Simhadri, *The Ex-Criminal*, 33.

The police department in the state was strengthened from the beginning of the twentieth century, allowing it to extend its rigorous surveillance of criminal communities. At the end of the first decade, the total strength of the police force, including the office establishment, the CID, and the Police Training Centre was 11,586, excluding the supervising staff. The supervising staff consisted of an inspector general, five assistants, seventeen mohtamims, seventeen assistant superintendents, and 119 *amins* (inspectors). Apart from these, there were the village police who were under the revenue officers of the *taluka*. They included 12,776 police patels, 2,798 kotwals, and 17,532 *ramosis* or watchmen, together numbering 33,106. The strength of the regular force was in the ratio of one policeman to every 990 persons in the *diwani* (government land) and 609 in the *sarf-i-khas* (crown land), and in terms of area, one policeman to 7:1 and 4.3 square miles, respectively.[99] The police force ratio per person of Hyderabad State was higher than that of the Madras Presidency, in which, in 1935, there was one policeman for 1,635 persons.[100] The strength of the regular police force in the state was further increased to 12,656 by 1920.[101]

This force efficiently identified and kept almost all the criminal tribes under surveillance. E. J. Stephenson who held charge of the Thagi and Dakaiti Department from 1884 to 1903 played a crucial rule in this regard. He merged the Thagi and Dakaiti Departments in 1903 and designated it as the Criminal Investigation Department (CID).[102] Rohillas and Sikhs were largely employed in the department, for they were considered capable of curbing dacoits.[103] Sikh policemen were employed in particular by the district police to patrol the main roads and stop highway robberies.[104] Many criminal communities were coming into the state from north India, especially from Rajasthan. So the Nizam's government entered into a reciprocal arrangement with Jaipur, Alwar and other princely

99 *Imperial Gazetteer Hyderabad*, 71.

100 Arnold, *Police Power*, 100.

101 *Statistical Abstract H.E.H. the Nizam's Dominions from 1321F to 1330F* (1911–21) (Hyderabad-Dn.: Government Central Press, 1925), 66.

102 *Report on the Administration of the District Police 1313F* (1903–4), 55.

103 *Report on the Administration of His Highness the Nizam's Dominions for the Year 1313F–1315F* (1903–6), (Bombay: The Times of India Press, 1910), 91.

104 *Report on the Administration of the District Police 1309F* (1899–1900), 91.

states regarding exchanging members of such criminal tribes.[105] The police force in the state meticulously registered and persecuted the criminal communities.[106] Although some of the higher Indian officials in Hyderabad did not subscribe to the dogma of 'hereditary criminality,' understanding that dacoity was most often caused by deprivation and hardship, this attitude was hardly tolerated by the British officials in the Nizam's service. Those who held such an opinion and did not act promptly to check the dacoits using these draconian laws were either suspended or dismissed from service.[107]

Among all the methods used by the police to identify criminals, anthropometry was the most discriminatory and inhuman. Anthropometry was a pseudo-science developed in nineteenth century Europe that was imported into colonial India to be used for both racial classification and the identification of criminals. When caught, the criminal often gave a false name, and it became difficult for the police to prove his previous criminal record. To overcome this predicament, the police began using anthropometric methods. This method was first applied in British Bengal in 1892, being used to identify criminal communities and gangs through the physical measurement of their bodies. Under this method, when the police caught someone they measured the length and breadth of his head, his left middle finger, forearms, feet, and height. These measurements were then classified and stored in a central office. The stored records were used to falsely implicate members of criminal tribes in unsolved cases. As a result, the number of cases filed against individuals increased and they were subject to harsher punishments, sometimes even execution or life sentence.[108] Under pressure from the British Indian government, this practice was introduced in Hyderabad State in September 1894. British officers provided the required training. The tools designed to measure human bodies in this way were procured from Bengal through the British Resident at Hyderabad. A separate bureau was created within

105 APSA, NJD, Inst. 24, List 6, S. no. 216, File no. H2/145/1912, 7.

106 *Report on the Administration of the District Police 1314F* (1904–5), 15.

107 The District Superintendents of Police of Madek and Indur were threatened with suspension by A. C. Hankin, IGP, for their attitude in this respect. See *Report on the Administration of the District Police1309F* (1899–1900), 127, 137.

108 APSA, NJD, Inst. 18, List 3, S. no. 29, File no. H2/c2/1891, 159.

the police department to deal with the matter. Some selected officers were sent to Bengal for training in anthropometry.[109]

This method of identifying criminals on the basis of the measurement of their bodies suffered a great deal from inherent defects. The slightest negligence on the part of the measurer could lead to a wrong result, and many criminal tribes became victims of such inaccurate measurements. To cite a case, Rajaram Banjara was convicted of murder in Akola district and sentenced for life by the district court owing to his past criminal record, generated using the anthropometric model. He was accused of committing many thefts in both the Nizam's and British territories and of escaping from the Bhir District Jail. It was later found that he had never been incarcerated there.[110] Although anthropometry was not used for more than five years in British India and Hyderabad State, the records stored in the central office continued to be used along with the fingerprinting method. This anthropometric method was soon abandoned, as it was a lengthy and clumsy process that cost a lot to administer. In 1897, the Home Secretary of the state enquired with the Bengal Government about continuing to employ this method. In response, the Bengal government wrote that it was no longer used by them, and that fingerprinting was preferred because it was easier, cost less and was less laborious. Thus anthropometry was replaced by fingerprinting in British India in 1897 and in Hyderabad State from July 1899.[111] However, anthropometry continued to be used to satisfy the European ethnographers' hunger to classify and measure the races of India. The south Indian ethnographer, Edger Thurston, continued to measure the noses of visitors to Madras Museum, of which he was in charge, well into the twentieth century.[112]

Fingerprinting was also used to torment the criminal communities in many ways. A Central Finger Printing Bureau was set up at Indore, Central Province, headed by the Assistant Superintendent General of Thagi and Dakaiti to assist the native states. A similar bureau, linked to the Indore Bureau, was created at Hyderabad. It would record fingerprints of accused criminals on slips and send them to

109 Ibid., 263–289.

110 APSA, NJD, Inst.18, List 3, S. no.44, File no. H2/b7/1894, 1–9.

111 APSA, NJD, Inst. 18, List 3, S. no. 29, File no. H2/c2/1891, 123–25.

112 Sengoopta, *Imprint of the Raj*, 123.

the Central Bureau, which would, in turn, examine the slips and identify past records of crimes and supposed residences of criminals. Under the reciprocal arrangement, these slips would be sent to any province or native state to trace out criminals.[113] This system was thus largely used to trace the criminals' previous records, especially if they were hiding in foreign territories. A photographic record was also maintained side by side with the fingerprints of all notorious criminals. As the method was being experimented with in the early years and struggling to establish accuracy, many criminal were booked in false cases. In 1903, 156 robbery cases were reported in the diwani and thirty-seven in sarf-i-khas areas. Out of these, twenty-five and four, respectively, turned out to be false during the court trials. But the police department would plead for the court to permit them to conduct further inquiries. The process usually dragged on for years and the police subjected the accused to a great deal of suffering during the trial period.[114] A huge archive of fingerprints of criminals was generated in the state, totalling 6,000 impressions in 1898[115] rising to 125,536 by the end of 1929.[116] Table 5 enables the reader to better appreciate the extent of the records collected. Although the Police Department was able to compile a massive number of fingerprint slips of criminal communities, it did not prove easy to use them to establish guilt during subsequent enquiries. For instance, in 1903–4, although the department collected 30,029 slips and received 4,760 slips from other states and British India, it could prove only 661 of the allegations. The inconsistencies of the system resulted in the accused being tortured during the trials and the criminal communities being branded on the basis of previous convictions.

Another method of monitoring the alleged criminal tribes was through the village officials. Village patwaris, police patels and watchmen were given a free hand in policing criminal communities at the village level. As mentioned above, this gave these officials massive power, so that they could use the members of such groups

113 APSA, NJD, Inst. 18, List 3, S. no. 29, File no. H2/c2/1891, 97,120.

114 *Report on the Administration of the District Police 1313F* (1903–4), 31.

115 Ibid., 47.

116 *Report on the Administration of His Highness the Nizam's Dominions for the Year 1338F* (1928–29) (Hyderabad-Deccan: Government Central Press, 1932), 32.

as virtually their personal slaves. The village officials and landlords' services were also used to track down criminal communities and register them under the CTA. In fact the state's Act specified their duties in their villages. It states that 'it shall be the duty of every revenue and police Patel, Patwari, Watchman, and of every occupier of land in a village, to give the earliest information in his such village, or on such land (as the case may be), of any persons who may reasonably be suspected of belonging to any such tribe class or gang.'[117] The police patel was also invested with judicial power; and he could award imprisonment for four days and a fine of three rupees.[118] The police department identified villages that did not have police patels and requested the government to fill the vacant posts.[119]

Table 5: Progress of fingerprinting in the state

Years	No. of slips in records	No. of slips received for search	Number of cases traced
1308 F (1898–99)	6,000	....	103
1309 F (1899–1900)	10,750	1,394	386
1310 F (1900–1)	14,758	4,394	496
1311 F (1901–2)	18,143	4,715	532
1312 F (1902–3)	23,812	4,505	595
1313 F (1903–4)	30,029	4,760	661

Source: Report on the Administration of the District Police 1313 F (1903–4), 47.

The village officials were also rewarded if they provided information regarding criminals. The *mali patel* of Waripalli village of Banswada taluka in Indur district was rewarded Rs 25 for promptly following up and arresting some Lambadas and Kolis, who had committed a robbery at his village, and confiscating the stolen

117 APSA, NJD, Inst. 18, List 3, S. no. 137, File no. H2/a5/1897, 35.

118 *Report on the Administration of H.H. the Nizam's Dominions for the Five Years 1308F–1312F* (1898–1903) (Hyderabad-Deccan: A. Venoogopaul Pillai & Sons, Government Printers, 1907), 94.

119 *Report on the Administration of the District Police 1313F* (1903–4), 62.

property.[120] When they killed the dacoits no cases were registered against them; instead they were presented with cash awards. There were many instances in which Lambadas were killed. In a case in Warangal, a *seksindi* (village watchman), and his brother attacked four Lambada dacoits and killed one; they were rewarded Rs 25 and Rs 15, respectively, by the police department.[121]

This practice of rewarding capture or killing of those belonging to criminal tribes was extended to the police department. In fact, in Raichur district, a large reward of Rs 1,000 was offered for the arrest of Limba Lambada, a supposedly notorious criminal. When the Raichur police apprehended him, the reward was distributed among the captors.[122] A great deal of weight was also given in promotion to those who located and registered large numbers of criminal tribes.[123] This tempted the lower-level police officials to falsely charge many innocent Lambadas and other criminal tribes under the Act. In Nizamabad, Latchmikant, a jamadar, arrested twenty-one Lambadas, but discharged them on Gayar's (Assistant Inspector General of CID) order, as no evidence was produced by the jamadar.[124] The irresponsible exercise of authority resulted in the CTA being misused, unintentionally and, sometimes, intentionally, to torture members of the criminal communities. In this way, policing gave rise to many malpractices. Since the Lambada community carried the 'criminal' stigma irrespective of their criminality, many policemen and even the common people would pose as CID police and threaten them with arrest to extract mamuls from them. In the Nizamabad district, for example, one Abdulla Muhammadan, a civilian, posed as a CID police and visited Isapally village and demanded five rupees and a fowl from a Lambada. However, he was later arrested and sent to jail.[125] But when someone from the Police Department indulged in this kind of extortion, no cases were registered against him. In Palam taluka of Parbhani district, a police

120 Ibid., 34.

121 *Report on the Administration of the District Police 1314F* (1904–5), 42.

122 *Ibid., 1338F* (1928–29), 11.

123 *Abstract Report of the Administration of His Excellency Sir Asman Jah Bahdur for the Four Years 1297F–1300F* (1887–1891) (Hyderabad-Deccan: H.H. the Nizam Government Printers' Press, 1898), 26.

124 *Report on the Administration of the District Police 1314F* (1904–5), 50.

125 *Ibid., 1338F* (1928–29), 12.

constable posing as CID inspector extorted money from a Lambada. When he was finally caught and tried in the court, the magistrate released him without any punishment or penalty on the grounds that he was a government employee.[126]

Despite all of this rigorous and punitive surveillance, dacoity continued and even increased in the state. The *Police Administration Report of 1337 F* (1927–28) noted that 'most cases in Nizamabad, Nanded and Adilabad were done by Lambadas, [and] their criminal activities were revived ever since the tribe was divided into good and bad conduct *thandas*.'[127] In fact, the spurt in dacoity was the outcome of the way in which the police treated the criminals, forcing them to repeatedly embrace dacoity after their release from jail. The dacoits when first arrested by the concerned district police were transferred to the Department of Thagi and Dakaiti at Hyderabad.[128] From there, they were sent to the special magistrate for trial.[129] The imprisonment lasted from six months to seven years, depending upon the gravity of the offence. Upon the completion of their term in prison, they were released on the condition that they reported every evening and morning before the *amin* concerned. An enquiry would be conducted before their release to ascertain whether their residence and occupation were as stated.[130]

In 1900, the government divided criminal tribes into those with 'bad' and 'good' character. Good behaviour warranted that the individual could be released on paying a security or submitting a *muchalka* (bond). But this was challenged in 1904 in the high court by police officers who argued that since the criminal tribes led a nomadic life, once they were released from jails they would flee to other places, mainly into jagir and *paigah* (land granted to nobles) areas, or beyond the jurisdiction of the state. On hearing these arguments, the court ruled that members of criminal tribes

126 *Report on the Administration of the District Police 1321F* (1911–12), 4.

127 *Report on the Administration of the District Police of H.E.H. the Nizam's Government for the Year 1337F* (1927–28) (Hyderabad-Dn.: Government Central Press, 1930), 29.

128 APSA, NJD, Inst. 17, List 7, S. no. 15, File no. H18/d10/1891, 3.

129 *Report on the Administration of the District Police of H.E.H. the Nizam's Government for the Year 1331F* (1921–22) (Hyderabad-Dn.: Government Central Press, 1924), 12.

130 APSA, NJD, Inst. 24, List 6, S. no. 260, File no. H2/l51/1914, 23.

should be released only on payment of security but not on muchalka. This created a vicious cycle of dacoity, as the convicts had to commit dacoities after their release to pay the debts that they incurred to pay security.[131] Sometimes the police officials exploited their vulnerability. They would assure their release from jails if they helped the police to round up other supposedly notorious criminals of their community. Lachu Banjara Naik, who was deputed by the Superintendent of Warangal, assisted the police in capturing Soma Banjara, a supposedly notorious dacoit in Warangal and took Rs 100 as a reward. Many Lambadas followed Lachu.[132]

Those who were sentenced for life were generally transported to British Indian jails, such as Tihar and Port Blair in the Andamans. The Nizam's government had to pay yearly charges to the British Indian government for accommodating its criminals in these colonial jails. For the year 1903–4, the Nizam's government paid Rs 5,116 towards the Port Blair jail charges.[133] Greater care was taken when picking prisoners to be sent to the Andamans, so as to choose able-bodied ones who could work in the plantation settlements there. Conditions there were extremely harsh, and the convicts were treated like slaves. It was reported that a large number of convicts from the state died in the first year of their transportation. So it was decided that only those who were below forty years, in good health and free from chronic diseases should be sent to Port Blair.[134] Once a convict was transported to the Andamans he was given up for dead by his family. If a death took place, a simple message would be sent to the family through the Resident. Hujoria Singh Lambada of Hingoli taluka in the state, who was sentenced to life in 1893 to Port Blair, died in the Andamans in 1915 from gangrene of the foot. The information was communicated to his family through the Resident only in 1916.[135]

131 *Report on the Administration of the District Police 1314F* (1904–5), 49.
132 *Report on the Administration of the District Police 1313F* (1903–4), 30.
133 APSA, NJD, Inst. 24, List 6, S. no. 68, File no. H2/k17/ 1904, 25.
134 Ibid., List 1, S. no. 437, File no. H2/k21/1915,1-2.
135 Ibid., S. no. 211, File no. H2/l 64/1916, 9.

CRIMINAL SETTLEMENTS

The colonial state was constantly modifying and perfecting its methods of surveillance of the criminal communities. Another initiative in this respect was the relocation of whole 'criminal' communities to settlements where they could be kept under close observation and, ideally, reformed. We can link this programme to a much a wider colonial agenda, which embraced a number of institutions—educational, medical, military and punitive—that were designed to create disciplined and docile individuals.[136] The practice of dealing with criminals separately in reformatory barracks was informed by a discourse of criminality in nineteenth century Europe that stated that a criminal steals not because he is poor—for not all poor people steal—but because there is something wrong with his character, his psyche, his upbringing, his consciousness, and his desires. So he must be handed over either to the penal technology of the prison or the asylum, or at least be kept under special supervision.[137]

The creation of criminal settlements was also a response to the fact that the criminal communities were seen to be living in conditions of extreme poverty. An increasing number of colonial officials began to argue in the early twentieth century that such criminality had been caused by the destruction of traditional livelihoods. A police official of Madras Presidency stated that 'the Lambadas were involved in dacoity largely because they lost their traditional occupation with the introduction of modern transportation and roads.'[138] Taking into account such considerations, the British Indian government incorporated a new principle into its revised CTA of 1911 that one aim of this legislation should be to reform criminal communities. This principle was subsequently incorporated in the CTA of Hyderabad State, as follows: 'the Government, under its own surveillance, can place any tribe, gang, or class, which has been declared to be criminal, in a reformatory settlement.'[139] In

136 On this, see Foucault, *Power/Knowledge*, 40.
137 Ibid., 44.
138 IOL, Indian Police Collection, Mss Eur, F.161/158, pre-1947, 12; also see Radhakrishna, 'The Criminal Tribes Act', 275.
139 APSA, NJD, Inst. 18, List 3, S. no. 137, File no. H2/a5/1897, 32.

this way, they could be brought back into the so-called civilised or mainstream society.

In India, the idea of reforming criminal communities was first initiated by Christian missionaries. The Salvation Army, with its belief in soup (food), soap (physical cleanliness) and salvation (spirituality), was particularly important in this respect. Founded by William Booth in London in 1861, it rapidly became a global organisation. He held that praying to god without food, shelter and clothing was meaningless, and he thus focused on improving the physical conditions of the people before turning their minds towards salvation. Frederic Booth-Tucker, William Booth's son-in-law, who was born in India to British parents on 21 March 1853, started the Indian wing of the Salvation Army. He was trained in law, and after passing the Indian Civil Service examination, he resigned from his prestigious job to join the Salvation Army in 1881. He took the Indian name Fakir Singh (fakir = religious mendicant) and started wearing Indian clothes. He began to serve the poor besides preaching the gospel of god. From the beginning of the twentieth century, the British Indian Government found the Salvation Army to be a useful agency for reforming criminal communities. The first experimental criminal tribe settlement was established at Gorakhpur in the United Provinces, where 300 *Doms* were placed under the supervision of the Salvation Army. Encouraged by the results, other provincial government decided to open settlements under the supervision of the Salvation Army, for example in the Punjab, Madras, Bengal, Bihar and Orissa. By 1923, there were twenty-four, and by 1933 thirty-five such centres run by the Salvation Army. The newspapers of the time reported that the settlements did not merely wean the tribes away from crime, but transformed them into model citizens. They were now educated and skilled artisans who observed the rules of hygiene and moral behaviour, and were happy and healthy as a result.[140]

The British Government, through the Resident, also directed the Nizam's government to take help from the Salvation Army in this respect. It therefore invited the organisation to take up similar work in the state. The Salvation Army started its activities in Hyderabad

140 Simhadri, *The Ex-Criminal*, 37–9.

State from 1909, setting up settlements at many places.[141] Subsequently, criminal reformatory settlements were also started by the state under the CTA of 1911. The state appreciated this approach as it could now confine all the criminal communities in one place and monitor them. In 1912, the Nizam's government erected a Criminal Tribes Settlement at Lingala in Mahbubnagar district, 104 miles from Hyderabad, to settle those convicted of dacoity.[142] Simultaneously, two settlements were established at Mannanore (close to Lingala) and Gandipet (in the vicinity of Hyderabad).[143] The Lingala settlement was taken up for reformative activities. It was set up to reflect a modern village, with *pakka* (proper) buildings, a hospital, a dispensary, a police station, schools for boys and girls, workrooms, bungalows for the officials and a temple. The village had well laid-out streets, planned sections, each housing various criminal communities. It enabled the police officials to watch the criminals' movements from the police bungalow itself.[144]

So-called notorious criminals of the state from the Lambada, Yerakala, Koracha and Waddira communities and their families were dumped at the settlement. In the first year, their numbers totalled 442; in the second year it rose to 1,164. In order to engage them in work, 4,119 acres of land were distributed to the families for cultivation.[145] Each family in the settlement was given five acres of land called the *eksal patta* (one year tenure) that could be renewed for the next year if the settler continued to stay there and cultivate the land. In the daytime they had to work in the fields and return to their huts by nightfall. They also had to attend the daily roll call each morning and evening. Children were lodged in boarding schools—one for boys and one for girls—where they were clothed,

141 APSA, NJD, Inst. 24, List 4, S. no. 187, File no. L6/e186/1909, 5.

142 *Report on the Administration of the District Police of H.E.H. the Nizam's Government for the Year 1323F* (1913–14) (Hyderabad-Dn.: The Central Jail Press, 1915), 25.

143 *Report on the Administration of the District Police of H.E.H. the Nizam's Government for the Year 1325F* (1915–16) (Hyderabad-Dn.: The Government Central Jail Press, 1917), 23.

144 *Report on the Administration of the District Police 1323F* (1913–14), 25; Bejoy Shankar Haikerwal, *Economic and Social Aspects of Crime in India* (London: George Allen & Unwin Ltd. 1934), 195.

145 *Report on the Administration of the District Police 1325F* (1915–16), 23.

fed, and taught at the expense of the state away from their parents. Once they were old enough, they were sent to the workshops to learn a trade. They could learn spinning and weaving, carpentry, tile and brick making, tailoring, or laundering. The government also provided them financial support to start a business. Those involved in farming were supplied with a pair of oxen, implements, seeds and provisions. Thus the criminals were carefully supervised and given the opportunity to take up an honest employment, while their children were put in schools and trained in industry or handicraft. The British congratulated the Nizam's Government for its efficient implementation of this project.[146]

In practice, such settlements did little to address the underlying problems, and they tended to be punitive rather than reformative. This was acknowledged by the Indian Jail Inquiry Committee of 1919–20, which suggested that 'the Criminal Tribes Acts should not be converted into an engine of repression and the ultimate aim of the settlements should be the absorption of the settlers in the general body of the community.'[147] Lingala was a protected forest zone and consisted largely of barren agricultural lands that did not give much yield. Though a few rain-fed streams flowed through the region, they were insufficient to cater for the agricultural needs and were barely adequate for even the drinking needs of the people and animals. Being surrounded by dense forest, the settlers were vulnerable to attacks from tigers, leopards and other predators. The land provided by the government did not help the settlers to meet their needs, and they continued to depend on dacoity. Although a rigorous surveillance was maintained in this settlement by the superintendent of police, three inspectors, ten sub-inspectors and 300 *jawans* (police constables)—a surveillance maintained even when the inmates went to answer nature's calls—the settlers at times managed to escape after the evening roll call so that they could loot nearby villages and return to their huts before 5 a.m.

Rather than reform the reputation of such people, their presence in such an establishment stigmatised them still further. Since the 'notorious' criminals were dumped at one location, outsiders viewed the entire settlement as a habitation of criminals. Members even of

146 Haikerwal, *Economic and SocialAspects*, 195.

147 Simhadri, *The Ex-Criminal*, 32.

their own community living outside the settlements avoided them. Suspicion was their constant companion.[148] My fieldwork from this area revealed that the people of Lingala were popularly called Lingala *shers* (Lingala tigers) and none dared associate with them; even their own community hesitated to have matrimonial alliances with them, fearing that their daughter/son would have the same stigma attached to them and encounter the wrath of the police.

The place also came to be known as the domicile of *Donga* Lingala (Lingala thieves). However, this led to an interesting phenomenon inter-caste marriage between different castes in the settlement. Lambadas and Yerukalas began to inter-marry, in violation of the caste rules of both groups. This started in the 1930s and continues till today.[149]

From 1937, a policy was adopted to release all registered members and their families who had displayed notably good behaviour in the preceding years. Many were released from the settlements, and the number of registered criminals substantially decreased in the state by the 1940s. As shown in Table 6, between 1937 and 1942, the total number of registered criminals declined from 9,110 to 5,922. There was a sharp decrease in the number of registered Lambada criminals, from 5,719 to 2,909 during the said period. This was perhaps because there was now a better climate for settling down in agriculture, for many other members of their community now made a living in this way. Still, even after their release from the settlement, they were kept under partial surveillance by the police as well as by the village officials, and they were subjected to much the same exploitation as in the past. This stigma made many Lambadas leave their habitations and retreat to forest regions where they could escape such victimisation.[150] Radhakrishna has discussed this issue most pertinently.[151]

148 Saheb, Kitab-e-Halaat, 9–12; *Report on the Administration of the District Police 1325F* (1915–16), 23.

149 Interview with Sabavat Ramlal Lambada and Mampa Narshimlu of Lingala, Mahbubanagar district, on 10 November 2004. Both of them were students of the reformatory school at Lingala.

150 *Administration Report of Hyderabad District Police for the Year ending* 1347F (1937–38) (Hyderabad-Dn.: Government Central Press, 1939), 24.

151 Radhakrishna, 'The Criminal Tribes Act', 279–81.

TABLE 6: Number of registered criminals in the state (tribe-wise)

Name of the tribe	1347 F (1937–38)	1348 F (1938–39)	1349 F (1939–40)	1350F (1940–41)	1351 F (1941–42)
Lambadas	5,719	4,488	3,653	3,137	2,909
Waddiras	903	939	891	903	865
Yerukalas	1,150	1,144	1,099	1,022	1,003
Patherwads	106	114	102	76	70
Pardis	741	754	703	720	694
Domars	182	174	163	159	144
Eramushtiwads	13	13	11	-	-
Bhamptas	154	145	138	138	124
Yenadiwads	20	25	22	13	13
Modikars	16	20	-	-	-
Erragolawads	38	32	42	39	38
Kammakapuwads	40	40	34	33	33
Chanchalwads	28	31	31	29	29
Total	**9,110**	**7,919**	**6,889**	**6,269**	**5,922**

Source: Based on the *Nizam Police Administration Reports* of the years concerned.

Apart from confining criminal communities to organised settlements, a large number of them were attached to factories, workshops, road and railway construction work, and irrigation projects as indentured labour, while some were kept under village officials and landlords, in similar capacities.[152] The state having experienced acute famines, the Nizam initiated a number of small and big dam projects between 1900 and 1923, such as Osmansagar, Pocharam, Nizamsagar, Himayatsagar, Wyra and Palair. Large numbers from the criminal were communities—mainly Lambadas, Mongs, Patherwadas, Yerkalas, Pardees, Domars and Telugu Bandi Waddiras—employed in the projects at Osmansagar, Himayatsagar and Nizamsagar.[153]

At Nizamsagar, where the project was started in 1923 on the Manjira River, eight kilometres from Nizamabad, there was a

152 Haimendorf, 'Tribal Population of Hyderabad', L.

153 S. P. Raju, *History of the Nizamsagar Project Hyderabad-Dn.* (Hyderabad-Dn.: Government Central Press, 1939), 11.

total labour force of 18,000, four thousand of whom were from the criminal communities. They were generally brought from the district jails and criminal settlements under police escort. Their camp was set up on an island in the river—suggestive of the Andaman islands—and they were kept under constant surveillance. While the troublesome characters were always escorted by jawans to and from the workplace, everyone in the camp, regardless of their criminal record, was placed under strict police watch. A compound enclosed by high walls, called a 'jail', was built close to the camp, and this was used for confining 'notorious' characters and for the internment of those who violated camp discipline. Daily tasks included carrying stones and mortar to the dam site, construction activities, etc. The average daily earning was eight annas. The money was not paid to them, but deposited in the post office in their names and the pass books were kept under the custody of the police department. A school was also set up on the island for the workers' children. This school had about 120 pupils, who attended school for half of the day and worked on the dam for the rest. They were taught craft work in addition to the regular curriculum. Instruction on cleanliness was another important part of the programme. The children were taught to use soap, wash their clothes frequently and keep themselves clean and tidy.[154]

Similarly, nearly 300 Lambadas were employed in the Bodhan Sugar Factory in Nizamabad District, where the men earned an average daily wage of seven annas and women four to six annas. They were also employed in the coalmines of Kothagudem.[155] Some were employed in the factories at Gulbarga and Aurangabad. However, this did not wash away their criminal stigma. Indeed, this stigma was a constant obstacle in obtaining work. The Police Report itself stated that 'the project of providing work to criminal tribes in industries and agriculture has failed in Hyderabad owing to the want of sympathy of the employers.'[156]

To conclude this chapter, dacoity increased phenomenally in Hyderabad State as communities lost their long-standing livelihoods with the onslaught of colonialism. It was a response to colonial

154 Ibid., 92–95.

155 Haimendorf, 'Tribal Population of Hyderabad', L.

156 *Report on the Administration of the District Police 1325F* (1915–16), 23.

intervention. The Lambadas had embraced dacoity and indulged in petty thefts during distress created by recurrent famines. This was compounded by the colonial techniques of surveillance, with the criminal stigma attached to their community pushing them further into dacoity. Although the CTA appeared to offer a legal framework against dacoity, the way in which it was deployed was largely coercive. Indeed the implementation of the CTA reminds us of Britain's Black Act of 1723, which was passed by the parliament without any discussion and under which hunters and paupers were hanged publicly and legally.[157] Of course, the Indian dacoits were not hanged, but many were killed in encounters, or died prematurely in colonial labour colonies and plantations, in prisons and in reformatory settlements.

Although Hyderabad State managed to suppress dacoity to some extent by the 1940s, and many Lambadas settled down as peasants and agricultural labourers, the criminal stigma attached to the community not only hampered their engaging in an honest livelihood but also severely tarnished their social reputation. Even after the demise of the Nizam, the new Hyderabad State declared about six lakh people (Lambadas, Waddars, Yerukulas and Pardhis) to be 'Ex-criminal Tribes'.[158] This state also promulgated a separate act called The Hyderabad Habitual Offenders Act of 1954 to monitor them further.[159] To counter this, they began to rearticulate their community identity, as we shall see in chapter 6. Despite this, the Lambadas' identity as a 'criminal tribe' continues to be a major concern for them in their everyday struggle as a poor and subordinated community within postcolonial India.

157 E. P. Thompson, *Whigs and Hunters: The Origin of the Black Act* (London: Penguin, 1975), 21–22.

158 *Social Service in Hyderabad* (1955), 107.

159 *The Hyderabad Revenue Law Journal* XI, 1955, 10.

4

Modern Forms of Land Relations

Exploitation and Revolt

The Lambadas, as stated in the preceding chapters, were pushed towards peasantisation by the state and became agriculturists from the middle of the nineteenth century, settling down in more significant numbers during the last quarter of the century. Those who were involved in food grain transportation and trade; cattle raising and dacoity settled as agriculturists in both the forest and the plains areas. For many, agricultural labour became their main source of livelihood.[1] It was during this period that the colonial-style *ryotwari* system was introduced in Hyderabad State.

Initially, the ryotwari system was beneficial to the Lambadas, helping them to occupy land in the forest and grazing areas. They were unable, however, to retain their control of this land for very long. The British Indian land tax system created a notion of land as alienable property that could be confiscated and sold for failure to pay taxes or repay debt.[2] Long-established rights of customary access to land were replaced with a notion of land as an alienable individual property that could be acquired by anyone with the resources to do so. Coupled with colonial promotion of a market-based economy, the introduction of the ryotwari system created

1 Jamshedji, *Notes on the Agriculturists*, 3–5; *Imperial Gazetteer, Hyderabad, Aurangabad Division* (Calcutta: Superintendent of Government Printing, 1907), 5.

2 D. Kumar, 'Caste and Landlessness in South India', *Comparative Studies in Society and History*—4, no. 3, April 1962, 237.

a great demand for land. This encouraged many non-cultivating dominant communities to grab vast acres of land through money lending, their influence over officials, or through force. This led to land ownership being concentrated in the hands of fewer and fewer landlords, moneylenders and rich peasants. In this process, subaltern peasants such as the Lambadas were expelled from their land and reduced to mere tenants at will or agricultural labourers.[3] Towards the end of the Nizam's rule, such peasants waged a violent revolt against eviction and exploitation, in which the Lambadas played a crucial role.

This chapter examines the ways in which the Lambadas settled down as agriculturists, abandoning their traditional occupation and nomadic lifestyle. It looks at the ways in which the new revenue and agricultural policies changed land relations in the state and how the new land relations and the market economy rearticulated the Lambadas' relationship with the moneylenders and members of the dominant peasantry. It also examines their strategies of resistance against land eviction and exploitation.

BECOMING PEASANTS

Initially, Hyderabad State had provided considerable cultivable land to the Lambadas and many other subaltern peasants. This was particularly the case in Telangana, which was covered with vast forests. The soil was rich and fertile and watered by huge irrigation tanks (6,783 tanks and 10,150 *kuntas* or ponds) in addition to natural rivers and streams.[4] Nevertheless, not much of the land was under cultivation until the second half of the nineteenth century; this was partly because agriculture was not yet fully integrated within the wider colonial economy. With greater integration, which was made possible by the expansion of railway and road networks, the area of cultivated land increased greatly, from 960,000 acres in 1875 to 29,100,000 acres in 1937.[5] A lot of this new area was brought under cultivation in the last decades of the nineteenth century. The introduction of the ryotwari system also played an important role,

3 Iyengar, *Economic Investigation*, I: 1–6.

4 *Report on the Administration of H. H. the Nizam's Dominions 1308F–1312F* (1898–1903), 251.

5 *Some Economic Facts and Figures*, 8.

as it encouraged subaltern communities to clear vast waste and forest tracts and bring them under cultivation as owner-occupiers.[6]

The Lambadas began their new lives as agriculturalists with a range of hurdles to overcome, as they were newcomers to these regions as well as inexperienced agriculturalists. Agriculture involves a multi-social network, and this they lacked.[7] They gained their land either by occupying waste and forest lands or through legal purchase. When, later, their land was grabbed by the dominant peasants, zamindars and moneylenders, they asserted their rights and reoccupied it by waging both legal and real battles.

The gazetteers and ethnographic notes of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century observed that a considerable number of Lambadas had occupied land, especially in the forest areas and barren lands, where they had settled as agriculturists. *The Imperial Gazetteer of Aurangabad Division* stated that the Lambadas emerged as the third largest peasant community after the Kunbis and Syndes in the district, with 8,900 cultivators at the beginning of the twentieth century.[8] Aurangabad was a political centre from the seventeenth century, and was the capital of the state that later became Hyderabad in its early years. There was a concentration of Lambadas in the district and in the adjacent districts of Parbhani, Nanded, and Bhir. They had settled in the region after losing their occupation as grain transporters to the army. They constituted an important peasant community especially in the Bhir district, with 36,400 cultivators.[9] The fertile soil of the region, of which 55 per cent was *regar* (black soil), and the early completion (between 1876 and 1882) of the revenue survey and assessment of the region helped the Lambadas to acquire land easily and register it in their name, as demand for land was still low at the time.[10] Gulbarga district, an old political centre, had a high concentration of Lambadas, many of whom had turned to cultivation. There were vast forest and barren lands there

6 *Report on the Administration of His Highness the Nizam's Dominions 1294F* (1884–85), 264.

7 David Ludden says there are four types of social networks that shape the peasant's world: kinship, religion, state and market interactions. See his *Peasant History in South India* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1989), 9.

8 *Imperial Gazetteer, Hyderabad, Aurangabad Division*, 5.

9 Ibid., 46.

10 Ibid., 8–9.

lying uncultivated, and the revenue survey and assessment was completed in the district by 1893. The Lambadas, with about 18,000 occupiers, emerged as the third largest peasant community there after the Kunbis and Kolis.[11] A similar trend was also witnessed in the forest tract of the Telangana region. In Warangal district, 41,000 Lambadas emerged as agriculturists.[12] Apart from being the political centre from the Kakatiya period, this district was covered with vast forests that it seems provided arable land for the new agriculturists. Nizamabad and Adilabad had 12,000 and 3,700 Lambada peasants, respectively, and they were the fourth largest peasant community in Adilabad district.[13] Adilabad and Nizamabad were completely covered by forest tracts watered by the Godavari River, providing rich cultivable land for the Lambadas.[14]

It is probable that the Lambadas' long association with the political centres while transporting grains to the army made them settle in the areas adjacent to the Hyderabad, Aurangabad, Gulbarga, Warangal and Raichur forts, all of which had been centres of politics for a long time. They also moved further afield to graze their cattle in forest lands, and in due course found that it was possible to cultivate these tracts, settling there permanently.[15] Initially, many Lambadas cultivated on tenancy and later acquired the land from the landowners. They also brought wastelands under cultivation. In the Aurangabad region, between Kannar and Outram Ghat, they started cultivation on a big Muslim cultivator's land and, in due course, came to own that land.[16] Similarly, in Adilabad, a few Lambadas came from across the Penganga in Tulsi villlage in 1900 with cattle herds. They rented land from a Gond Raja and transformed themselves into agriculturists.[17] In 1890s, some Lambadas came with their traditional salt trade to the Bodh and Kinwat regions of Adilabad and settled as agriculturalists.[18] The Nizam government's

11 *The Imperial Gazetteer of India, Vol. XII* (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1908), 378.
12 *Imperial Gazetteer, Hyderabad*, 165.
13 Ibid., 125, 187–88.
14 Ibid., 3.
15 Bilgrami, *Historical and Descriptive Sketch*, 341.
16 Grigson, *The Challenge of Backwardness*, 69.
17 Haimendorf, *Tribal Hyderabad*, 191.
18 Ibid., 160.

new revenue policy, known as the *ijara* system, started in 1885, was aimed at bringing waste and forest land into cultivation and was a great boon for the Lambadas. Under this system, these lands were given to the peasants and assessed at lower rates. Gradually, the assessment value was increased till its normal value was reached. The concession was spread over five to thirty years, and in some cases over forty years. After the expiry of this period, the land was treated on par with government land and fully assessed.[19]

Taking advantage of the ijara system, the Lambadas acquired fairly large tracts of forest land, especially in the Gulbarga, Aurangabad, Karimnagar, Adilabad, Warangal Nalgonda and Mahbubnagar districts. The Karimnagar, Adilabad and Warangal forests became the main settlement sites for the wandering Lambadas. To some extent, these forest lands served two of their greatest needs: as grazing pastures and cultivable land.[20] They usually went with cattle herds into the forest for grazing and converted the wealth from cattle into landed property. It was, in fact, easy for them to settle down and take up agriculture because the cattle wealth allowed them to equip themselves with basic agricultural instruments and an initial capital layout. A few Lambadas were brought to the forest as wage labourers by members of the dominant peasant caste.[21] Additionally, forest contractors, jagirdars and officials brought a number of them to the forests as labourers to fell trees in Warangal, Adilabad, Nizamabad and other regions. Subsequently, by offering bribes to officials, many Lambadas settled on the cleared land and started cultivation.[22] At the beginning of the twentieth century, under the CTA, the government also settled some of them on arable land in the Mahbubnagar forest between Amarabad and Manuanoor.[23]

Thus the Lambadas were able to occupy land through various methods and become cultivators. Settlement was not however an

19 *Nizam Revenue Administration Report 1324F* (1914–15), 53.
20 Grigson, *The Challenge of Backwardness*, 11.
21 Haimendorf, *Tribal Hyderabad*, 191.
22 *Administration Report of the Forest Department of His Highness the Nizam's Dominions for the year 1307F* (1897–98) (Hyderabad-Dn.: H.H. the Nizam's Government Printers' Press, 1899), 18.
23 *Administration Report of the Forest Department of His Highness the Nizam's Dominions for the Year 1318F* (1908–9) (Secunderabad: Cheekoty Veerunnah & Sons, Government Printers, 1911), 9.

easy process, and there were many pitfalls along the way. They suffered harassment from forest and revenue officials and landlords. We will discuss this in detail in the following sections.

MODERN FORMS OF LAND RELATIONS

It would be helpful here to examine how modern forms of land relations were established in Hyderabad State in order to understand the ways in which the Lambadas were dispossessed of their land. After consolidating their political hegemony, the British tried to create a landed aristocracy. This was attempted through a system called the *zamindari* tenure. The British introduced the zamindari system first in 1793 in Bengal Province, through which the zamindars were issued property rights. Subsequently, an alternative system called the ryotwari tenure was enforced in the Madras Presidency. In contrast to the Bengal zamindars who effectively became absentee landlords, the ryotwari system aimed to bestow property ownership on the actual cultivators. This system grew in popularity and superseded the zamindari tenure, being extended during the second decade of the nineteenth century to the rest of India, including the princely states.[24] The colonial ryotwari system was introduced in Hyderabad State from the middle of the nineteenth century.

After Hyderabad State broke away from the Mughals in the beginning of the eighteenth century, it evolved its own administrative system for collecting land revenue.[25] The land was broadly classified into three categories: *khalsa* or *diwani*, paying revenue direct to the government; the *sarf-i-khas* or crown tracts; and the *jagirs* (donated to nobles and religious institutions and persons). Revenue from the diwani and crown land was auctioned and collected by the talukdars (generally nobles) or by the *sarbastadars* or the *guttidars* (contractors). Other revenue collectors included the government creditors, to whom tracts of land were assigned for a certain number of years for specific amounts. They were referred to as collectors and revenue farmers. They conducted business with the peasants through *naibs* (agents) and deputy naibs, who, in conjunction

24 Thomas R. Metcalf, 'The Struggle Over Land Tenure in India 1860–1868', *The Journal of Asian Studies* 21, no.3, May 1962, 295.

25 Karen Leonard, 'The Hyderabad Political System and its Participants', *The Journal of Asian Studies* 30, no.3, May 1971, 569.

with the *deshmukhs* and *deshpandyas* (revenue collectors at the village level), made *kowls* or agreements with the cultivators for the payment of specific amounts per annum.[26] So, in real terms, neither the revenue farmers nor the actual revenue collectors held rights over the land. The former usually stayed in Hyderabad city or in the district headquarters and never visited their lands. It was the village heads, deshmukhs, deshpandyas and *maktadar* (revenue collector of an *inam* village or village gifted for religious purposes) who had direct control over the land.[27]

We have insufficient evidence on revenue collection practices at the village level during the eighteenth and first half of the nineteenth century. Nevertheless, insights are offered by the handful of studies carried out during this period by the British Residents at Hyderabad and other officers. Charles Metcalfe's report of 1822 on the agrarian conditions in the state is most important in this regard.[28] Similar reports were also prepared by Dr Bradley in 1848–1849, Dr Walker in 1848, and Colonel Meadows Taylor in 1853.[29] These reports were, however, distorted by a colonial agenda that sought to depict the Nizam's administration as a vehicle for despotism. They sought to show that the ruler owned the land, while the actual cultivators were mere tenants without any land rights. Further, these reports considered the state revenue collection methods and policies irrational and unscientific. According to Dr Walker:

> Government imposed on the *taluqdars* or *guttidars* no rules or regulations whatever for the protection of the ryot, nor did those contractors or collectors-in-chief impose any restraint on the *sarbastadars*, to whose tender mercies the cultivators were left. The result was that the peasantry were squeezed to the utmost extent, consistent with their being able to cultivate and yield revenue either in the shape of money or produce.[30]

In fact, the peasants enjoyed a customary right over their land under the regulation of the village heads. The reports even acknowledge

26 *Report on the Administration of His Highness the Nizam's Dominions 1294F* (1884–85), 252–53.

27 Ibid., 255.

28 INA, HRR, Vol. 565, Part. I, 1872–1888, 95–236.

29 *Report on the Administration of His Highness the Nizam's Dominions 1294F* (1884–85), 254–55.

30 Ibid., 257.

that the village revenue collectors had only a partial control over the land and it was the peasants who enjoyed substantial rights over the land they cultivated.[31] Revenue collection, however, involved a massive misappropriation of land revenue.[32] The consequent revenue shortfall led to the Nizam's continuing dependence on creditors, which not only furthered the misappropriation but also led to creditors gaining the right to collect taxes from areas that generated large revenues.[33] Only in the middle of the nineteenth century was it realised how severely this was affecting state revenues.[34] In December 1831, the Resident at Hyderabad wrote to the Governor General of India that although the misappropriation curtailed state revenue, it did not affect the peasants and the labouring classes.[35] This suggests that there was massive misappropriation of land revenue collection at higher levels. However, this should not lead us to assume that the peasants escaped being exploited by the moneylenders.[36]

Studies from other parts of India help us to better understand the pre-colonial revenue practices in Hyderabad. In pre-colonial India, land rights were apparently designated by village communities based on the principle of long-standing settlement. According to this principle, once rights were established over particular lands, they could not be taken away. However, such a right could lapse for a span of time, for example, in a bad year when people migrated in search of sustenance for themselves and their cattle. Under this system, land rights were usually held by a dominant community, who, in turn, would regulate the subordinate peasantry's access to the land. The members of the dominant communities were often allowed to cultivate the land on favourable terms, and were given hereditary occupancy that was guaranteed. However, when subordinate peasant

31 IOR, Board's Collection, F. 4.1183, 1830–1831, 30743 (16): 65.

32 *Report on the Administration of His Highness the Nizam's Dominions 1294F* (1884–85), 255.

33 In 1240F (1830–31), the government's debt to sahukars was Rs 30,00,000 out of the total debts of Rs 51,00,000; see IOR, Board's Collection, F. 4. 1365, 1832–1833, 54292: 101.

34 *Report on the Administration of His Highness the Nizam's Dominions 1294F* (1884–85), 254.

35 IOR, Board's Collection, F. 4. 1365, 1832–1833, 54292: 131.

36 V. Bhaskara Rao, *Agrarian and Industrial Relations in Hyderabad State* (New Delhi: Associated Publishing House, 1985), 17.

communities were given access to the land, it was on the basis of a tenancy agreement. Although this system involved exploitation and suppression of subordinate communities, their right to cultivation was upheld.[37] There were also payments in kind to service castes, as in the *jajmani* system, or the *balutedari* system of Maharashtra. The land tax was realised through a system in which the official administrative hierarchy was matched by the hierarchy of the merchant community. Merchants-cum-moneylenders (*sahukars*) would pay the land tax of their clients to the government on their behalf at the time of collection. They would then realise that amount augmented with interest at harvest time and in further instalments. The practice was heavily exploitative, but it gave a rest period and the option to pay on easy instalments to the peasants.[38]

The first serious effort to introduce the ryotwari system into Hyderabad State was made by Metcalfe between 1820 and 1828. This initiative failed due to the conflict between the local and British officials about its implementation.[39] As Richard Temple says, 'there was always dispute between the British higher officials and their Hyderabadi subordinate officials.'[40] The ryotwari system was only implemented effectively in the state from the time of Prime Minister Salar Jung I (1853–83). The Bombay ryotwari system provided the model for what was known locally as the *zillabundi* system. Introduced first in 1864, it entailed the removal of middlemen and tax farmers.[41] Salar Jung was, to some extent, more successful in forging his agenda in the Marathwada region than he was in Telangana, because the Marathwada peasants were familiar with a similar system (Todarmal ryotwari) deployed by Malik Amber

37 Hardiman, *Feeding the Baniya*, 92–96.

38 Ibid., 24–26.

39 *Report on the Administration of His Highness the Nizam's Dominions 1294F* (1884–85), 251.

40 Richard Temple, *Journals Kept in Hyderabad, Kashmir, Sikkim and Nepal*, ed. Richard Carnac Temple, 2 vols. (London: W. H. Allen & Co., 1887), I: 140.

41 *Report on the Administration of His Highness the Nizam's Dominions 1294F* (1884–85), 258; this was the period when the British forced the Princely State to implement the ryotwari system. See David Hardiman, 'Baroda: The Structure of a "Progressive State"', in *People, Princes and Paramount Power: Society and Politics in the Indian Princely State*, ed. Robin Jeffrey (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1978), 107–135.

and later by the Maratha rulers. As it was, the colonial-style survey and settlement of the Marathwada region was completed by the 1880s, when the same project was only initiated in the Telangana region.[42]

The Marathwada districts were different in every respect from those of Telangana. In the former, the soil, consisting of the detritus of trappean rocks, was of a very fertile nature, retaining a considerable amount of moisture. The Telangana region, on the other hand, had a granite foundation, and the soil was sandy, producing good crops only with extensive artificial irrigation. It was reported in the administration records that the peasants were opposed to the deployment of the zillabundi system in the Telangana region, presuming that the payment of revenue in cash would worsen their existing precarious condition.[43] It is unclear which group of peasants was most opposed to it.

In the Telangana region in particular, the deployment of the ryotwari system resulted in the production of a large non-cultivating class of landowners. In many cases, the ryotwari surveys converted the falsely claimed, illegal holdings of dominant rural groups and the bureaucracy into legal holdings with paper deeds. Deshmukhs, deshpandyas, maktadars and other revenue agents were honoured with *watan* or *mash* (annuities) based on the percentage of the past collection. When their watan was abolished by the new revenue policy, they began to grab vast tracts of land in the villages. Their access to land records helped them to take control of thousands of acres of fertile cultivated land and register them under their names.[44] Also, a huge number of jagirdars, besides fourteen *samasthandars* (traditional rajas), remained undisturbed.[45] Each jagirdar and samasthandar, although they did not have the same land rights as the zamindars in British India, exercised strong control over their jagirs. About 29.4 per cent of the people, 34 per cent of the villages

42 Ibid., 265.

43 *Report on the Administration of His Highness the Nizam's Dominions 1294F* (1884–85), 261.

44 Iyengar, *Economic Investigation*, III: 5.

45 There were five types of jagirdars (Inam-al-Tumgha, Zat Jagir, Paigah, Tankhasi Mahalot and Crown Jagir). Out of a total of 1,165, Muslims were 534 in number, as against 632 Hindus. See *Report of the Royal Commission on Jagir Administration and Reforms*, 27–45.

and 35.7 per cent of the area of the state were under their control.[46] It created a range of complex administration issues in the state since it was sometimes very difficult to demarcate the jagir from the diwani land.[47] The former was brought under the ryotwari system only after the 1930s. Although the peasants were given a *patta*, the jagirdars did not allow them to mortgage or sell their land without prior permission; even the crops to be grown on the land were determined by the jagirdars.[48] The new system thus tended to create a non-cultivating, powerful landed class with legal land deeds. This situation continued until after Indian independence.

The state always protected the interests of the jagirdars and the dominant peasants. It held that the fragmented holdings of small peasant cultivators were viable neither for growing commercial crops nor providing revenue for the treasury. In October 1904, the Nizam's government issued a special order to distribute forest land to dominant peasants and landlords under the ijara system. Large tracts of forest and unclaimed land was thus parcelled out to maktadars, deshpandyas, deshmukhs, sarbastadars and a few influential persons from Hyderabad city, and by the end of 1915, 383,180 acres of land were brought under cultivation.[49] Besides the old landed gentry, the new village officials (patwari and police patel) grabbed large tracts of rich, arable and irrigated land because of their access to land records, emerging as a powerful landed class (consisting mostly of Brahmans, Marathas, Kunbis, Kapus (Reddy) and Velamas in the villages).[50] Unoccupied wasteland in the villages was claimed by either the old revenue collectors or the new village patwaris and police patels; any illegal cultivation was seriously punished.[51] The traditional trading and merchant

46 The percentages include Jagirs, Samasthan and Sarf-e-Khas. See A. M. Khusro, *Economic and Social Effects of Jagir Abolition and Land Reforms in Hyderabad State* (Hyderabad: Atma Ram and Co., 1958), 2.

47 Ibid., 50.

48 *Report of the Tenancy Committee*, 10.

49 *Administration Report of the Forest Department 1313F* (1903–4), 88; *Nizam Revenue Administration Report 1324F* (1914–15), v, 53–4.

50 Ibid., 58.

51 APSA, NHD, Confidential, Memorandum on the high-handedness of deshmukhs by Ravi Narayana Reddy to D.G.P, No. 635, dated 28 May 1944, File no. 15/AND/54F (1944-45), 65–71; *Report of the Tenancy Committee*, 11.

communities also joined in this operation, grabbing considerable land. The moneylenders, particularly the Komatis and the Marwaris, extended their activities during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries to the frontier areas, and grabbed land through moneylending and their close connection with revenue officials.[52]

In fact, the new revenue system led to concentration of land in the hands of the non-cultivating peasantry since there was liberty to relinquish and occupy any vacant land. Many poor peasants who migrated during bad seasons, returned to discover that their land had been occupied 'legally' (paper deeds) either by the village official or the dominant peasant community on the claim that it was unoccupied.[53] The procedure to own unoccupied land was as follows: if someone found unoccupied land, he had to make an application to the tahsildar to register it in his name. The tahsildar would advertise the applicant's particulars and wait for fifteen days for any objections. If there were none, he would register it in the applicant's name. If there was a counterclaim, the tahsildar would go by the following criteria: the first preference to be given to the adjoining or resident cultivator of the village, or a professional cultivator, or the sahukar, and then the applicant. These criteria always worked against the subalterns. This procedure was never followed in practice and the 'unoccupied land' was usually grabbed by the dominant peasants. Sometimes, the tahsildar would change the criteria to suit the interests of the dominant community.[54] The Lambadas, particularly, since they had to be on the move for months together either grazing or trading their cattle, would discover on their return that their land was occupied by the landlords. These practices led to an abnormal increase in the number of non-cultivators and farm labourers in the state.[55]

There were as a result a range of forms of peasant holdings that were classed officially as *pattadari* (occupant), *pot-pattadari* (joint-occupant), *shikmidari* (tenant) and *asami shikmi* (tenant-at-will).[56] Each class had a specific relation to the cultivated land. Except for

52 Haimendorf, *Tribal Hyderabad*, 82, 95, 112, 157, 165, 203.

53 *Report of the Tenancy Committee*, 13.

54 *Nizam Revenue Administration Report 1324F* (1914–15), 50.

55 Iyengar, *Economic Investigation*, III: 80.

56 Nizam Revenue Administration Report 1324F (1914–15), 50.

the dominant pattadars, land relations of almost all other classes involved ruthless exploitation. These different forms of land holding were further reinforced through their recognition in legislation.[57] Owning a patta became crucial for successful and independent cultivation, leading in time to a fierce competition for patta land. Although the Lambadas wanted to obtain patta rights, they lost out increasingly and most ended up in the other, subordinate categories, living as tenants-at-will or on daily wage labour. Many who had reclaimed land from forests and wastelands lost their control of it when big landlords acquired patta rights in these tracts.[58] This led to an intense concentration of land in the state, particularly in the Telangana region.[59] Although theoretically the ryotwari system did not recognise the existence of middlemen between the cultivator and the state, they existed in practice on a large scale. By the end of 1936, there were eighteen lakh landowners in the state, of whom about six lakhs, or one-third, were non-cultivating owners, who leased their land to peasants on highly extractive tenures.[60]

57 A series of acts were promulgated from the 1930s which classified agrarian classes and ensured their protection. These were the Land Alienation Regulation of 1933, *Asami Shikmi* Act of 1945, Debt Conciliation Act of 1938, Money Lenders Act of 1938, Land Alienation Prevention Act of 1936, Hyderabad Bhagela Agreement Regulation of 1936, Hyderabad *Bhagelas'* Contracts Act of 1944, The Tribal Areas *Dastur-ul-Amal* (Land Alienation Act) of 1947, and The *Vetti* and *Bhegar* Prohibition Regulation of 1947. For the deployment of these Acts, see *Report of the Royal Commission on Jagirs Administration and Reforms 1356 F* (1946–47); Bhaskara Rao, *Agrarian and Industrial Relations*.

58 Iyengar, *Economic Investigation*, III: 820; Haimendorf illustrates at great length how tribal lands were being grabbed by big peasants who acquired patta rights in Adilabad, Warangal and Mahbubnagar districts; see his *Tribal Hyderabad*, 8–10, 35, 41–4, 56, 66–82, 155–7, 166, 184.

59 P. Sundarayya cited that Visnur Deshmukh of Jangaon taluka in Warangal had 40,000 acres of land and lordship over forty villages, the deshmukh of Suryapet had 20,000 acres, the deshmukh of Babashahebpet in Miryalguda taluka had 10,000 acres, the deshmukh of Kallur in Madira taluka had one lakh acres, Nanna Reddy Pratap Reddy of Suryapet taluka had one lakh and fifty thousand acres of land. See his *Veera Telangana Viplava Poratam – Gunapatalu* (Telugu: Telangana Peasants' Armed Struggle and its Lesson (Vijayawada: Yugendhar Offset Printer, 1973), 8.

60 S. M. Bharucha, *Agricultural Indebtedness in H. E. H. the Nizam's Dominions* (Hyderabad-Dn.: Government Central Press, 1937), 5.

Table 7: Variation of agrarian classes between 1901 and 1911

S. No	Agriculture class	1901	1911	Variation in percentage
1.	Rent receivers	39,581	731,804	+1748.8
2.	Ordinary cultivators	3,473,561	4,064,950	+17.0
3.	Agents and managers	62,954	34,540	-45.1
4.	Farm servants & Labourers	1,023,643	2,788,212	+172.3
5.	Growers of gardens	52,175	22,804	-95.7

Source: Nizam Revenue Administration Report 1324F (1914–15), 28.

The concentration of land in the hands of the non-cultivating class increased considerably from the early twentieth century onwards. As shown in Table 7, the number of rent receivers increased from 39,581 to 731,804, a 1,748.8 per cent increase, between 1901 and 1911. This number further increased to 761,614 by 1921.[61] Although it is difficult to pinpoint the exact cause for this massive increase in rent receivers, the Revenue Administration Report of 1914–15 observed that:

> The extraordinary increase in the number of rent-receivers, if at all accurate, means that the land is going out of the hands of the cultivators into those of rent receivers. The two great lessons which these statistics convey are, first that the pressure on land is increasing from various causes, and secondly that the ownership and the profits thereof are being increasingly appropriated by mere rent-receivers.[62]

It is probable that the severe famines of the last decades of the nineteenth and the first decade of the twentieth century played an important role in bringing about this increase, as destitute peasants sold their holdings to wealthy rent-receivers. Many also died or migrated during famines, and lost control over their land as a result. Even in better times, the subaltern's vulnerability was exploited ruthlessly by the dominant peasants and unscrupulous moneylenders, often resulting in the former losing his land to the latter.

61 *Census of India 1921, Hyderabad*, I: 270.

62 *Nizam Revenue Administration Report 1324F* (1914–15), 28.

The above figures also show that the number of farm servants and labourers increased from 1,023,643 to 2,788,212, i.e. by 172.3 per cent. There was also a relatively small increase of 17 per cent in the number of ordinary cultivators. This might have in part reflected the fact that some relatively prosperous service castes were eager to acquire land for status purposes, as they believed that it would enable them to claim a higher caste position in the census. The Census Report of 1921 noted that 'the Kalal, who perhaps finds liquor-selling not so dignified to one who claims to be a Kshatriya, has taken to agriculture, to a much greater extent than to liquor-selling.'[63]

As seen in Table 7, there was also a decrease in the number of agents and managers. This was mainly because the big estate owners let out their land for cultivation. The category of growers of garden produce including fruit, flower, vegetable, betel, and vine growers declined; probably there was insufficient data as these crops were grown as subsidiary crops. And it was difficult to separate growers of gardens from ordinary peasants.[64] In fact, the garden crops were, it was reported, yielding better returns to the peasants than the ordinary crops.[65]

THE COMMODIFICATION OF AGRICULTURAL PRODUCE

The colonial land tax system was designed to stimulate the extension of commercial agriculture and the commodification of agricultural production. Although ostensibly designed to create wealth in the Indian countryside that would benefit all, in practice this process led to a concentration of rural capital in the hands of landlords, moneylenders and dominant peasants and the impoverishment of the subordinate strata. Above all, as Partha Chatterjee has pointed out, it provided the basis for expanding the process of colonial appropriation in British India from the second half of the nineteenth century.[66] In Hyderabad State, the development of rail and road

63 *Census of India 1921, Hyderabad*, I: 279.

64 *Nizam Revenue Administration Report 1324F* (1914–15), 28.

65 *Census of India 1921, Hyderabad*, I: 270.

66 On this point, see Partha Chatterjee, 'The Colonial State and Peasant Resistance in Bengal, 1920-1945', *Past and Present* 110, February 1986, 176.

networks saw a rapid increase in the cultivation of cotton and other commercial crops, which, in turn, created a greater demand for land in the state. Dominant peasants and moneylenders began to appropriate the land of the subaltern peasantry through foreclosing loans that had been advanced at high rates of interest. Further, as land itself had been commodified under the new rule of property—again a creation of the colonial state—it was easy to transfer land from one owner to another.[67]

As stated in chapter 2, the extension of the HGV railway line in 1897, from Manmad to Secunderabad via Aurangabad, Jalna, Parbhani, Nanded and Indur, brought remarkable changes in the market economy of Hyderabad State.[68] This railway line connected all parts of the state with the world economy by connecting the rural areas of the state with Bombay and Madras, which under colonial rule had become major entrepôts within a wider world economy. This provided the non-cultivating class greater opportunity to dispose of the produce extracted from the rural poor within the world market, as also to the middle class peasantry to ensure better prices for their produce. Particularly the introduction of railways gave a great impetus to cotton growers.[69] Cotton was cultivated on a modest scale in the state till the last quarter of the nineteenth century. But with the restoration of Raichur Doab from the British in 1860, there was a marked increase.[70] Berar and Raichur had been earlier handed over to the British by the Nizam to meet the expenses of the Hyderabad Contingency, and the British had encouraged cotton cultivation there on a large scale.[71] When Raichur was restored to the Nizam, it was taken as a model for cotton crop cultivation in the state. Furdoonji makes an interesting statement about the process that the 'American war gave boom to cotton cultivation, when Berar cotton cultivator made silver plough; all others also started growing cotton.'[72] Of course, it was the dominant peasants and landlords

67 Bharucha, *Agricultural Indebtedness*, 15–17.

68 *Report on the Administration of H.H. the Nizam's Dominions for the Years 1304F–1307F* (1894–98) (Madras: Lawrence Asylum Press, 1899), 134.

69 *The Imperial Gazetteer Hyderabad*, 29–30.

70 *Report on the Administration of His Highness the Nizam's Dominions 1294F* (1884–85), 261.

71 Fraser, *Our Faithful Ally*, 351–71.

72 Jamshedji, *Notes on the Agriculturists*, 81.

who made the most extensive profits from cotton. Commercial crops were generally detrimental to the subaltern, as cultivation was expensive and carried out on borrowed money, so that crop failure—which was inevitable sooner or later—could easily ruin them as the moneylenders demanded repayment of their loans.[73]

The cotton growing area increased in the state from 1,653,669 acres in 1897–98 to 4,019,331 acres in 1928–29. By 1937, Hyderabad emerged as the third largest cotton-producing region in India after Bombay Presidency and the Central Provinces, with 15 per cent of the produce.[74] The Marathwada districts and parts of Telangana (Warangal, Adilabad, Nizamabad, Medak, etc.) were the main cotton-growing tracts in the state.[75] The black (*regar*) soil in these districts was excellent for cotton crops. The normal yield per acre was 100 lbs in Marathwada districts and 80 lbs in Telangana districts.[76] As it brought in enormous revenue, the state also encouraged the peasants to grow cotton on a large scale by supplying high-yielding seeds. The local variety 'Bharathi', which was widely cultivated, was replaced by the high-yielding Gaorani and Cambodian cotton. The Cambodian cotton was anticipated to yield 1,500 to 2,000 lbs per acre. The new varieties had been propagated by the Agricultural Association, which was set up with state sponsorship to encourage commercial agriculture in even the remotest areas. The Association worked very effectively through its district and taluka bodies.[77] Apart from this, the government also established Agricultural Farm Centres in all the districts to provide

73 David Washbrook has brought attention to how the commercialisation of agriculture ruined subaltern peasants with dominant peasants making considerable profits in Bellary district of Madras Presidency. 'The Commercialisation of Agriculture in Colonial India: Production, Subsistence and Reproduction in the 'Dry South', 1870–1930', *Modern Asian Studies* 28, no.1, February 1994, 129–164.

74 *Some Economic Facts and Figures*, 9; Vaikuntham, *State, Economy and Social Transformation*, 125.

75 Ibid., 125.

76 *General Notes on Provisional Figures for Standard Outturns of Crops in the Dominion*, (Hyderabad-Dn.: Department of Statistics, H.E.H. the Nizam's Government, 1931), 58.

77 *Annual Administration Report of the Department of Agriculture 1323 F* (1913–14), 1, 44.

new varieties of seeds to peasants.[78] However, these centres failed to benefit the poorer peasants. The agricultural report states that 'the ordinary farmers call the farm houses a government work which is not possible for an ordinary cultivator and so useless even to have a glance at it.'[79] Rather than benefit the subaltern peasants, the encouragement of commercial farming in fact led to their eventual loss of land. Along with cotton, other commercial crops like red-chilli, groundnut and castor were also widely grown in the state, especially in the Telangana districts, and were in strong demand in British India.[80] We have discussed in chapter 2 how the state was drained of its agricultural produce, which was diverted to markets in British territories after the inauguration of the railways in the state. Many subaltern communities, including the Lambadas, also began growing commercial crops, which gradually drove them into the moneylenders' trap because of higher investments. Many of them, as we shall shortly see, lost their land to the moneylenders.

THE MARGINALISATION OF THE LAMBADA PEASANTRY

Figures in the census reports clearly show the extent to which the Lambadas were losing their land in the early years of the twentieth century. The percentage of Lambadas recorded as cultivators went down from 44.5 in 1911 to 32.8 in 1921, and 12.7 in 1931.[81] After losing their land, they were forced to settle either as *shikmidar* and *asami shikmi* (hereafter *kowldars* or tenants) or *bhagela/jeethagadu* (a sort of bonded labourer) or agricultural labour. The new land

78 The main centres were set up at Himayat Sagar near Hyderabad, Sangareddi in Medak, Mahbubnagar, Alir in Nalgonda, Nizam Sagar in Nizamabad and Parbhani. See *Programme of farm Experiments and Agricultural Propaganda in the Telangana Division for the year 1338–9F* (1928–29) (Hyderabad-Dn.: Government Central Press, 1929), 2; *Annual Administration Report of the Department of Agriculture His Exalted Highness the Nizam's Government for the Year 1329F* (1918–19), 3.

79 Ibid., 3.

80 *Annual Administration Report of the Department of Agriculture 1323F* (1913–14), 46–48.

81 *Census of India 1911,Hyderabad*, I: 167; *Census of India 1921, Hyderabad*, I: 316; *Census of India, 1931, Hyderabad*, I: 184.

system of Hyderabad, developed according to the colonial model, was clearly not working to their advantage. This rapid loss of land helps us to better understand the reasons for growing Lambada militancy and insurgency in the period after 1930.

Reports stated that the land transfers had taken place through both sale and debt foreclosure, and also by forced expulsion, especially when the subaltern peasants cultivated rich wetlands.[82] Nonetheless, land transfer due to debt was more conspicuous throughout the state from the beginning of the twentieth century. One-third of the total transferred land in Warangal and Raichur was due to debt, and it was 50 per cent in Aurangabad.[83] Apart from the traditional moneylenders (Marwaris, Komati and Lingayat sahukars), almost all the dominant peasant communities (cultivating and non-cultivating) were involved in moneylending. Kesava Iyengar states that 'the transfer of possession of land by unfair means is not from *ryots* to non-*ryots* population. Rather there are instances of the struggle for existence as within a species the bigger fish living upon the smaller.'[84]

They would lend money to poor peasants on crop security as well as land security.[85] There was a saying in the state that 'once the peasant entered into the sahukar's books he either dies or becomes *bhegar* (forced labour).'[86] The legal interest rate was anywhere between 9 and 12 per cent, but the actual rates were higher—anywhere between 24 and 30 per cent; sometimes even 50 per cent or more. Poor yields and the vicious circle of exploitation created by the colonial establishment ensured that the peasants could never repay the principal. It provided the moneylender the opportunity to charge compound interest, pushing the subaltern peasant into a permanent debt-trap. The moneylenders generally preferred to give credit in cash and take back in kind, for these terms assured greater profits than the interest, which was fixed on the harvest price that was usually very low.[87] It meant that the peasant sold his produce

82 Iyengar, *Economic Investigation*, III: 8–9.

83 Ibid., *Rural Economic Enquiries*, 116.

84 Ibid., *Economic Investigation*, II: 379.

85 Ibid., I: 27.

86 Jamshedji, *Notes on the Agriculturists*, 79.

87 Bharucha, *Agricultural Indebtedness*, 26.

before the harvest itself. If the produce was rice, the 'interest' was five maunds for six months and ten maunds for twelve months per *khandi* (eight bags). Jawar was calculated annually at the rate of ten maunds or half a khandi per khandi of jawar, which meant an interest of 50 per cent. Each family was traditionally attached to a particular sahukar and the chain of debt was passed on to the children.[88] Once the peasant registered with a sahukar it was difficult to escape from his clutches. In fact, the sahukars reinvested the surplus that they generated by exploiting the subaltern peasants. The colonial state had given legal protection to moneylenders as they provided the capital necessary for the expansion of agriculture and commercial cropping. If the moneylenders faced any problem in realising their debts, they could file a case in the civil court.[89]

The Lambadas borrowed primarily for cultivation or household expenses, or for buying land.[90] It was precisely because they were left with nothing after repaying old debts and the land tax that they had to repeatedly depend on new borrowings for their livelihood. Generally, they borrowed on land and crop security; only in a few cases was personal security offered.[91] The Lambadas were some of the most indebted peasants. According to Iyengar's survey, out of sixty-six indebted peasants of Nirkhed village of Jalna taluka in Aurangabad district, twenty-one were Lambadas.[92] Their continuing dependence on loans often led to their forfeiting their land. Lambada Hemla of Kondur village, Warangal taluka, was forced to sell his land (thirteen acres and twenty five *kuntas*) to Karra Narasaya in 1921 to clear his accumulated debts.[93] Many other Lambadas shared Hemla's fate.[94]

As Iyengar illustrates, the ousting of the Lambadas as well as other poor peasants from their land owing to debt was largely by *thondi* (oral mortgage). In many cases, the transaction began with

88 Ibid., 83; Iyengar, *Economic Investigation*, VI: 17.

89 Hardiman, *Feeding the Baniya*, 22–25, 43–61; Leonard, 'The Hyderabad Political System', 574.

90 Iyengar, *Economic Investigation*, III: 16.

91 Ibid., II: 222; IV: 189.

92 Ibid., IV: 193.

93 Ibid., III: 35.

94 Iyengar has given a list of such cases. For instance see his *Economic Investigation*, IV: 216–19.

the peasants borrowing money from the sahukar. After a few years, in spite of payments made annually by the borrower, the sahukar would get the thumb impression renewed for larger and larger amounts, and finally threaten to drag the 'defaulting' peasant to court, which gradually drove the peasant to make a compromise through a registered agreement for *bynama* (selling in all legal solemnity), forcing him to dispose of his lands to the sahukar. The borrower was thus reduced to a tenant on his own land. The sahukar, of course, orally promised the peasant that the agreement was only nominal—merely to persuade the borrower to clear off his debt as quickly as possible—and that the land would be released at any time the borrower repaid the amount. The peasant was also promised that he would not be expelled from his land as long as he paid the debt annually. But the amount paid annually by the deceived peasant was considered as interest on the principal amount. After a few years, the sahukar approached the court with a registered agreement and grabbed the borrower's land; for the sahukar, the land had good market value and would yield considerable rent annually.[95]

In particular, the sahukars took advantage of dearth and famine, which was a recurring problem in the early twentieth century. These recurring crop failures, along with the effects of World War I, led to a rapid increase in food grain prices that the sahukar exploited to the full.[96]

There were also a number of forced evictions of the Lambadas and other subalterns by the dominant peasants, particularly from irrigated land.[97] This suggests that the poor peasants would acquire wasteland and convert it into good arable land through their hard work, only for it to be eventually grabbed either by the moneylenders or the dominant peasant castes, who claimed it as patta land. Daravat Thakur Lambada cleared nine acres and three kuntas of land in Chinna Nagaram village of Mahbubabad taluka and converted it into arable land. After a few years, Ahmad Alikhan of the same village grabbed the land by force, claiming that it was

95 Ibid., IV: 6.

96 Bahadur, *Report on the Famine*, 30.

97 Iyengar, *Economic Investigation*, III: 9.

his patta.[98] In this way many Lambadas were ousted from their land through debt or by force. Eviction became more vigorous with the high influx of newcomers from the Andhra region of Madras presidency into the state from the beginning of the second decade of the twentieth century. This influx was more conspicuous in Aurangabad, Mahbubnagar, Nalgonda and Nizamabad districts, where canal irrigation had been initiated under the Tungabhadra and the Nizam Sagar dams.[99]

Those Lambadas who had moved to and settled in the forest tracts faced a triangular fight with the forest officials, local adivasis and non-adivasi ijaradars in order to acquire and assert their rights over the land. As stated in chapter 3, the Lambadas' movements in the forests were closely scrutinised.[100] Although there were laws to bring forest land under cultivation, the forest and revenue officials hardly cooperated with the Lambadas. If the Lambadas had got permission from the Forest Department to occupy land, the Revenue Department would query it; and vice versa if they had got permission from the Revenue Department.[101] For instance, some Lambadas managed to get permission from the Revenue Department to clear the land for cultivation in the Tadikonda, Lingampalli and Kamrapalli forests of Yellandu division. But when they failed to keep the forest officials happy with a bribe, the latter started harassing them by alleging that the land they cultivated was under *shikargah*. Many Lambadas were ruthlessly evicted from their land. The Lambadas also had serious problems with the shikargah system. The Hyderabad contingency military officers who had been hunting in these zones would always object to cultivation in or near a shikargah, saying that it would drive away the tigers. As these zones were close to the open forests in which cultivation was allowed on lease, it became difficult for the Lambadas to acquire land in the forest. In fact, there was constant confrontation between the Lambadas and the forest and revenue officials with regard to both grazing cattle and agricultural land.[102]

98 Ibid., 412.

99 Iyengar, *Rural Economic Enquiries*, 117.

100 *Report on the Administration of His Highness the Nizam's Dominions 1331F* (1921–22), 61.

101 APSA, NRAD, Inst. 38, List 2, S. no. 244, File no. G1/c132/1906, 13.

102 Ibid., 21.

To add to their woes, the Lambadas were blamed for the plight of the local adivasis. The massive influx of outsiders into the forest led to the displacement of the local adivasi communities such as the Gonds, Kolams and Naikpods, particularly in Adilabad and Warangal districts. Haimendorf laments that 'once Lambadas (Banjaras) have gained a foothold in a village it is generally lost to aboriginals.'[103] The fact was that the Lambadas were, in many ways, better placed to acquire rights over land than the local adivasis because of their entrepreneurial past and their knowledge of the outer world having been nomads and commissariats to the British army. Until the end of the nineteenth century, there was little problem in acquiring land in the forests. In the last decades of that century, a large number of Lambadas coming from the Berar, Nanded, and Yeotmal regions of Marathwada settled in the Adilabad forest tract. There was plenty of land lying uncultivated in the forest and it was not necessary to buy or acquire it by auction. Haimendorf tells us that taking advantage of this situation, Baliram Hiraman Lambada obtained a patta of about 2,000 acres in Mandwi village of Adilabad.[104] All of these caused strained relations between the Lambadas and the adivasis, leading to a continuing distrust between the two groups.

The advantage of the Lambadas in this respect did not last for long. The opening up of the district under the ijara system to dominant caste peasants from the beginning of the twentieth century and the growth of infrastructure in terms of roads and communication networks created a great demand for land in the region. From that period, the state encouraged members of dominant peasant communities to bring forest land under cultivation under the ijara system, offering considerable rent concessions and other privileges. Under the ijara system, those who brought one-third of the land under cultivation in the leased village would be given the position of the police patel in the village, and was sometimes also made pattadar of the whole village.[105] This scheme induced many dominant castes to infiltrate the forests, hastening the eviction of local adivasis from their land.

103 Haimendorf, 'Tribal Population', XLIX.

104 Ibid., *Tribal Hyderabad*, 197.

105 *Report on the Administration of His Highness the Nizam's Dominions for the Year 1322F* (1912–13) (Hyderabad Deccan: A. V. Pillai & Sons at the Gladstone Press, 1915), 12.

The new influx was more apparent in the Adilabad district, where the 1931 census returned the following population figures by caste: Kunbi, 85,290; Komati, 12,766; Velama, 7,530; Brahman, 14,557; Maratha, 29,312; and Muslim, 45,821. Most of these groups were newcomers to the district. There were also other service castes like the Chakali, Mangali, Kummari, Lambada, Yadava, Mala, Madiga and Vadrangi, who were brought by landlords to serve them and cultivate their lands as the locals were considered unfit to handle the new technology.[106] This process led to the further eviction of not only the local adivasis from their land, but also in time the Lambada settlers.

After the heroic Jodenghat revolt of the Gonds against the landlords and the state, the government decided, in 1943, to distribute forest land to the adivasis under *laoni* (kowl) patta. Although the Lambadas were by now recognised as 'tribals' and many of them had lost their land to landlords, they were excluded from this scheme, owing to their strained relations with the local adivasis.[107] The same was the case when the state enforced the Tribal Areas *Dastur-ul-Amal* 1356F (1946–47) Act to protect adivasis from land hungry landlords.[108] Without protection from the state, many Lambadas were subject to exploitation by the dominant caste peasants and moneylenders.

After losing their land, many Lambadas became kowldars (tenants). In 1936, there were about 575,000 kowldars-at-will in the state. They had little or no land of their own and cultivated 145,979 acres or 7 per cent of the pattadar's land.[109] The Lambadas predominantly constituted the kowldar community in the state—some of them had begun their practice of cultivation as kowldars, while others had been reduced to becoming kowldars. The Boregoan Khurd village of Aurangabad district can be taken as an example, where there were fourteen Lambada kowldars-at-will out of the

106 Setumadhava Rao, *Among Gonds of Adilabad*, 130–31.

107 Grigson, *The Challenge of Backwardness*, 32.

108 The tribes included under the Act were: Bhils, Chenchus, Gonds, Hill Reddis, Kolams, Koyas, Naikpods, Pardhans, Thotis and their subdivisions. Ibid., appendix, 110–115.

109 Bharucha, *Agricultural Indebtedness*, 5.

twenty-two kowldars of the village.[110] In Palsa village of Nanded district there were fifty-two kowldars-at-will, of which ten were Lambadas.[111] The kowldari system prevailed more in the Telangana than the Marathwada region, and there an even greater proportion of the kowldars were Lambadas. In Ramavaram village of Warangal district, there were forty-four Lambada kowldars out of the total of sixty-two.[112] The period of kowl (contract) and the rent level were not uniform between villages; sometimes one could find a variety of practices in the same village. In the Telangana districts, the period of tenancy was very short, with 80 per cent being kowldars-at-will, 12 per cent contracted for two years, and 8 per cent for five years and above.[113] The Tenancy Committee reported that 'most tenancy was for one year and it was rare to see the same land for two to five years.'[114]

TABLE 8: Some Lambada tenancies in Warangal district

Tenant name	Dry land in acres & kuntas	Wet land in acres & kuntas	Duration of contract	Terms of tenure
Lambadi Bhikya	11–35		1 year	Rs 48 yearly
Badavath Raju Banjara	3–5		1 year	Rs 234 yearly
Daramsooth Ghorya Banjara	13–5		1 year	Rs 100 yearly
Lambadi Kotari		2–14	1 year	Half crop yearly
Lambadi Fakira	7–18		1 year	Half crop yearly
Lambadi Maddarya	12–30		1 year	Rs 65 yearly

Source: Iyengar, *Economic Investigation*, III: 824–27

The majority of such Lambadas were kowldars-at-will. Such kowldars were not allowed to develop the land they cultivated; this resulted in poor yields.[115] Although there was no uniform rent

110 Iyengar, *Economic Investigation*, IV: 270–71.

111 Ibid., II: 132–35.

112 Ibid., III: 822–27.

113 Ibid., 12.

114 *Report of the Tenancy Committee*, 3.

115 Iyengar, *Economic Investigation*, IV: 10.

practice in the state, *The Report on Agricultural Indebtedness* tried to classify them. The landowner and kowldar shared the produce, government rent and agricultural expenditure in varying proportions. In some cases, the kowldar would bear all the cultivation expenses, while the landowner would pay the land assessment. However, it varied based on many conditions—place, social relations, nature of land and crop. Where there was no crop sharing and the rent was a fixed quantity of grain, the owner generally would demand the rent in cash, particularly when the produce rates went down. During the harvest time, the prices were bound to be low, and it was an immense struggle for the kowldar.[116] Tenants cultivating jagir land had to deliver a number of *najaranas* (gifts) on the occasion of festivals and celebrations to the jagirdar's house apart from the regular rents.[117] Sometimes the kowldars had to work in the landlord's field for free; at other times their labour there was set against rental charges. Except for money lending, all contracts and transactions were entered into orally and were heavily governed by local and community/caste traditions.[118] That is to say, there was no written contract as we see in more developed forms of capitalist agricultural practice.[119]

In fact, after paying the land rent and interests on debts, the Lambada kowldars were left empty-handed; sometimes they had to borrow from the moneylender to pay the rent when the crops failed due to a bad season. The kowldari system thus exposed the kowldar to every pitfall. Despite crop failure, he had to pay kowl dues along with the land revenue and local cess in full within the specified time; otherwise the landholder would directly take possession of the produce and make good his dues.[120] Famines were particularly disastrous for the kowldars.[121] Over and above the tenancy dues agreed upon, the kowldar had to give one bundle of hay per *biga* (one-third of an acre) of wetland, and one bundle of *kadbi* per plough used in cultivating dry land. The kowldar was only

116 Bharucha, *Agricultural Indebtedness*, 4–5.

117 *Report of the Tenancy Committee*, 12.

118 Iyengar, *Economic Investigation*, II: 246.

119 On this point see, Chatterjee, 'The Colonial State and Peasant Resistance', 175.

120 Iyengar, *Economic Investigation*, III: 422–25.

121 Dunlop, *Report on the Famine Relief*, 15–16.

responsible for petty repairs and maintenance of the rented plot. Unlike the upper caste kowldar who was allowed sub-tenancy, the lower caste kowldar was permitted neither sub-kowldari nor co-kowldari. The kowldari system often ended with either the kowldar's death or his fleeing from the village and contracting his labour as bhagela/jeethagadu.[122]

Most of the Lambada kowldars were landless, so it was easy for them to migrate.[123] For example, Bhoju Lambada of Kerur village of Bolali taluka, Nanded district, practised cultivation on twenty-five acres and twenty-seven kuntas of land on kowl; he also borrowed some jawar at Rs 16 from a *Vani* on crop security. Recurrent crop failure forced him to depend on the sahukar for subsistence; and when he could not repay the accumulated debts and land rents, he left the village and migrated to a distant place.[124] Many Lambadas followed suit. In fact this is how the subalterns opted out of the new system. But this, in turn, had a serious impact on those who remained. Their supposed migratory tendencies made many moneylenders insist on early repayment. Sometimes the latter would take the help of the deshmukh or local officials to realise their debts. As per this arrangement, the moneylender transferred the deeds to the deshmukh's name, making the subaltern the latter's client. The deshmukh would then use force to realise the dues, which were shared with the moneylender according to the initial agreement.[125]

Another practice associated with agriculture was bhagela or jeethagadu. The former term was popular in the Marathwada and Kannada regions, whereas the latter prevailed in Telangana. It is difficult to translate what these terms mean precisely. It signifies a sort of bonded labour with limited freedom. A considerable number of Lambadas were employed on these terms, particularly those who had lost their land to the moneylenders and dominant peasants and could not afford to practise kowl. Every landholder maintained a number of bhagelas, depending upon the land area and workload. This institution had been in existence for a long time in the state.

122 Iyengar, *Economic Investigation*, III: 423.

123 Ibid., 110–112.

124. Ibid., II: 367–72.

125 APSA, NHD, Confidential, File no. 15/AND/54F (1944–45), part I, 45.

Remuneration was generally yearly and in kind, besides interest-free advances on occasions such as children's marriages and festivals, and for daily needs like clothing and *gunta chutta* (a kind of cigar). The practice was that once a bhagela registered with a landholder it was difficult for him to extricate himself; sometimes the bond extended to his children.[126] This practice was more vigorous in the Telangana than the Marathwada region. Each landlord would have ten to fifty bhagelas—the larger the number of bhagelas, the higher their status and influence in society. Pratap Reddy of Ghanapur village of Mulugu taluka in Warangal district had forty-three bhagelas on his one thousand or more acres of land.[127] Lambada Bhagelas were conspicuous in many villages. Out of the twenty-four bhagelas, five were Lambadas in Kondur village of Warangal.[128] As shown in Table 9, each Lambada Bhagela had a different tenure and wage packet.

Many recent studies have revealed how petty debts and exploitation of agricultural labour eventually drew many subaltern communities into bonded labour.[129] Many Lambadas borrowed money from landlords for household needs or cultivation. The exploitative agrarian relations ensured that the debts accumulated, which usurped their freedom of labour, eventually forcing the Lambadas to join as bhagelas. Sometimes the subalterns were made to become bhagelas by force. This happened more in the Telangana region, and it was employed especially if the deshmukh felt that a person or a group's independent nature could pose a threat to him. The deshmukh would call them into his gadi and force them to execute promissory notes for thousands of rupees, of course without paying them that amount. He would then use that paper as an instrument to threaten the subaltern and make him surrender. Sometimes he even went to the extent of forging promissory notes and obtained court decrees producing false evidence. Since the subalterns were unable to pay the amount, they were forced to become bhagelas.[130]

126 Iyengar, *Economic Investigation*, III: 13.

127 Ibid., 202.

128 Ibid., 120.

129 For instance, see Jan Breman, *Beyond Patronage and Exploitations: Changing Agrarian Relations in South Gujarat* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1993), particularly see chapter 4, 'The Hali System in South Gujarat', 36–67.

130 APSA, NHD, Confidential, File no. 15/AND/54F (1944–45), part I, 66; Devulapally Venkateshwar Rao gives a number of such cases in Telangana region; see his *Telangana Prajala Sayudhaporaata Cheritra* (in Telugu: History of Telangana People's Armed Struggle) (Hyderabad: Proletarian Line Publication, 1988), 65–70.

This gave rise to further heinous practices; for example the women of a bhagela household were frequently harassed sexually and often raped by the landlords. The usual practice was that the bhagela

TABLE 9: Employment terms for *bhagelas* in Warangal villages

Name of the master	Name of the bhagela	Name of the village	Years of service	Amount of debt & interest percentage	Remuneration (*jeetam*)
Veeramahani Sonayya	Lambadi Oosya	Kondur	4	Rs 20 (12 per cent)	1 *maund* of *jawar*, 6 *kunchas* of paddy given every alternate month
Polamani Ralayya	Lambadi Somya	-do-	1	Rs 8 (12 per cent)	-do-
Bathen Ramaya	Oomla Banjara	Chinna Nagaram	1	Rs 80 (12 per cent)	1.5 maunds of jawar per month
	Halavat Chakru,		2	Rs. 60.90 (15 per cent)	Rs 75 yearly
Nagabandi Appayya	Ramji, Devji, Dharavt	Ammapalam	1 1	-do- -do-	Rs 60 –do- Rs 40 –do-
	Bojya		2	Rs 40	Rs 65 –do-
Miliqireddy Hanumaya	Banjara Hamiya	-do-	1	-	Rs 60.9 yearly
Yassa Appaya	Lambadi Rupla	Thenkalla	6	-	Daily 1.5 seers *jawar*
Veeraya	Lambadi Manga	-do-	2	Rs 58 (15 per cent)	Rs 4 per month
Vadla Ramaswamy	Somla Banjara	-do-	5	Rs 4	Daily 1.5 seers *jawar*

Source: Iyengar, *Economic Investigation*, III: 202–5

would work in the landlord's field and his wife would work in the house.[131]

About 60 per cent of the Lambadas of the state were enumerated as agriculture labourers in 1931.[132] Many recent studies have revealed how the number of agricultural labourers phenomenally increased in colonial India due to colonial revenue and agricultural practices.[133] There were 1,475,000 agricultural labourers in the state in 1936. Most of them belonged to the depressed castes—Adi Hindus, Dheds, Mahars, Chamars, Moochis, Mangs, and Lambadas. Wages were mostly paid in kind at very low rates. According to *The Agriculture Indebtedness Report*, men were paid three annas and five paisa, and women two annas and four paisa, whereas men were paid six to eight lbs of paddy and women three to six lbs in kind.[134] Wages were slightly higher in the Marathwada than the Telangana region. In Walki Khurd village of Nanded, out of thirty-three labour families, fourteen were Lambadas. In that village, no Lambada possessed either land or cultivated on tenancy.[135] The exploitation of agricultural labourers by landlords was limitless. Although *vetti* (another heinous practice of serving dominant castes without remuneration, generally assigned to the 'untouchable castes') was not extended to the Lambadas, they were forced to work for the dominant castes without payment. They borrowed from the latter and it became compulsory to offer free service to superiors.[136] Particularly during famines and droughts, they faced great exploitation, as they largely depended on agricultural labour. They died in huge numbers at such times. The *Census Report of 1921* reported that 'the toll of epidemics and famines is always very high in these classes (farm servants and field labourers).'[137]

131 APSA, NHD. Confidential, File no. 15/AND/54F (1944–45), part I, 21.

132 *Census of India 1931, Hyderabad*, I: 184.

133 Kumar, 'Caste and Landlessness in South India', 337–63.

134 Bharucha, *Agriculture Indebtedness*, 61.

135 Iyengar, *Economic Investigation*, II: 157.

136 Sundarayya has given an illuminating account of this practice. See his *Veera Telangana*, 1–20.

137 *Census of India 1921, Hyderabad*, I: 270.

Thus a considerable number of Lambadas were reduced from land occupants to mere agricultural labourers. It was against this exploitation and eviction of land that they waged a revolt, to which we shall shortly turn. Land was an important issue in the Lambadas' revolt. We have seen how agricultural land increasingly passed into the hands of the non-cultivating and dominant caste peasants. This was happening at the same time that land was becoming less and less available in the forest tracts. As discussed in chapter 3, the state experienced a severe degradation of its forests from the 1920s, and the occupation of forest land for agricultural purposes was banned. Of course, a few influential landlords continued to grab forest land. Apart from this, under the regeneration and working plans, the Forest Department restored large tracts of forest wasteland, and cultivation on those lands was completely prohibited.[138] As a result, the total land available for cultivation decreased. In 1930–31, the total cultivable land realised was 24,306,293 acres against 25,036,475 acres in 1924–25.[139] Although there was a decrease of arable land, land utilisation in the state was higher (64.5 per cent) than in the 'A' grade states of British India (52 per cent).

There was thus enough land in the state for all who wanted to cultivate, but it was concentrated in the hands of a few. It would be useful here to look at Iyengar's analysis in his survey of Warangal district. In the twelve surveyed villages of the district, there were 33,258 acres and two kuntas of land, of which 14,087 acres and twenty-five kuntas constituted dry land, 3,702 acres and seven kuntas wetland, and 322 acres and thirteen kuntas garden land.[140] The land data was entered in the land revenue records against 841 pattadars, but in eighty-nine pattas the land was held by persons in no way related to the respective pattadars. The actual number of occupants was 1,196. It was calculated that on average each occupant shared fourteen acres and fifteen kuntas of dry land, five

138 Mason, *Note on the Progress*, 3.

139 *Statistical Abstract of H.E.H the Nizam's Dominion , from 1331F to 1340F* (1921–31), 148.

140 Surveyed villages were: Kondur (Warangal taluka), Ghanapur (Mulugu), Katapur (Mulugu), Gudur (Pakhal), Chinna Nagaram (Mahboobabad), Ammapalam (Mahboobabad), Gokanapally (Khammam), Thenkalla (Khammam), Bheemavaram (Palwancha) Achyutapur (Palwancha), Banigandlapad (Madira) Ramavaram (Yellandu). See Iyengar, *Economic Investigation*, III: 2.

acres and thirty-three kuntas wetland, and one acre and sixteen kuntas of garden land. If this land had been distributed equitably to the 2,203 resident families (of which 1,358 were landholding and 845 landless) of the twelve villages, each family would have got six acres and sixteen kuntas of dry land, one acre and twenty-seven kuntas wetland and six kuntas garden land. By any standards, if such an equitable holding had been even meagrely irrigated, it would have been sufficient for a family to lead a comfortable life. But the unfortunate fact was that 1.7 per cent of the occupants held more than 35 per cent of the total land. It was worse when it came to wetland, where 2.5 per cent held 50 per cent of the total land.[141] Thus, though there was land for all, the big fish of the village cornered the larger portions, suppressing the subalterns' right to land.

This land concentration created multiple domains of power at the village level. These domains were set up substantially from the beginning of the twentieth century. Some landlords were also absorbed into the state establishment as village heads and revenue collectors. Their control over land under the new revenue system allowed them to rule village life. Indeed, some landlords virtually ran a parallel government in their villages. A confidential report stated that 'they (landlords) exercise considerable influence in villages as landowners. They give their lands on *kowl* to only those tenants who dance to their tunes. If the tenants do not conform to their wishes, they do not renew the *kowls*.'[142]

As lords of the village, they controlled the banjar and wastelands and used them as they wished. If others tried to occupy them or graze their cattle there, they would be brutally punished as a lesson to others. Beside this, the landlords exploited the labour of tenants and subaltern communities ruthlessly in the name of vetti and bhagela.[143] In one way or the other, every community and individual in the village suffered such abuses of power. This, coupled with a decline in food availability, brought about first by the economic depression of the 1930s and then the scarcities produced by the

141 Ibid., 3–4.

142 APSA, NHD, Confidential, File no. 15/AND/54F (1944–45), part. I, 18.

143 Ibid., 65–71.

Second World War, drove many toiling Lambadas and other subaltern communities to violent resistance.[144]

Confrontation over land became a major issue during the 1930s. It grew as support was garnered from wider political movements in and outside the state. This was a period when the nationalists in the state were converting peasant grievances into a larger anti-Nizam and anti-colonial struggle. The CID report stated:

> The agitation is to a considerable extent based on legitimate grievances which have hitherto had little opportunity of being ventilated, and it is only recently as a result of the courage engendered by mass organisation that the misdeeds of the Deshmukhs and Watandars are coming to light.[145]

The Nizam's government became aware of the simmering land conflict in the rural areas, and promulgated a series of land acts from the 1930s in order to neutralise the situation. These acts were strongly pushed forward by the liberals such as C. Von Fürer-Haimendorf and Kesava Iyengar, who had been trained in England. They, among others, played a crucial role in forcing the administration to promulgate land 'protective acts'.[146] These conformed to British Indian land legislation that was already in force. Nevertheless, they came too late and could not save the toiling

144 Barry Pavier, *The Telangana Movement, 1944–51* (New Delhi: Vikas Publishing House Pvt. Ltd., 1981), 27–46.

145 APSA, NHD, Confidential, File no. 15/AND/54F (1944–45), part. I, 18.

146 Iyengar was the most influential personality from the 1920s in the state administration as Professor of Economics at Nizam College, Economic Survey Officer and Revenue Secretary. Besides his celebrated Economic Survey Reports of 1929–30 and 1949–51, he wrote a number of articles in reputed journals and newspapers on various economic and agricultural problems of the Hyderabad State. See his *Studies in Indian Rural Economics* (London: P. S. King & Sons Ltd., 1927), 2–3; also see his *A Note on Rural Reconstruction Policy in Hyderabad* (Secunderabad: The Osmania Printing Workers, 1941), 1–3: Haimendorf was sent by the British to Hyderabad State in the early 1940s to advise the Nizam on the problem of the rebellious Gond adivasis of Adilabad. He was positioned as advisor to the Nizam for tribal and backward classes and Professor of Anthropology at Osmania University in Hyderabad. His four reports on the tribals of Hyderabad were instrumental in the making of tribal policy in the state. See his *Tribal Hyderabad*, iii–xii.

peasants from the clutches of the dominant peasants and jagirdars, who were strongly established and maintained a close nexus with the local government authority.[147] Based on his experience in the adivasi tracts of Adilabad and Warangal districts, Haimendorf commented that 'the Land Alienation Act appears to be here little more than a dead letter.'[148] In such circumstances, the subaltern was left with only one weapon— that of revolt.

THE LAMBADAS' LAND REVOLT

The Lambadas' revolt for land was linked intrinsically to the larger peasants' struggle in the state—the 'Telangana Peasants' Armed Struggle.' Launched between 1946 and 1951 under the leadership of the Communist Party of India (CPI), this was, relatively, one of the more successful peasant movements during the colonial period. Four thousand villages in the Telangana districts participated in it, but it was largely concentrated in Nalgonda and Warangal. By the end of the movement, about ten lakh acres of land were confiscated from the landlords and distributed to the landless subalterns. The movement united almost all the communities in the villages into a single force waging a stubborn war against the landlords and the state police and armed forces.[149] The Lambadas were among those who initiated this struggle, and they played a crucial role in it throughout.[150]

The Telangana peasant movement has attracted the attention of a number of scholars. Most, however, have focused either on the nature of its leadership or its class composition.[151] Although Barry

147 APSA, NHD, Confidential, File no. 15/AND/54F (1944–45), part. II, 19–20.

148 Haimendorf, *Tribal Hyderabad*, 72.

149 Sundarayya, *Veera Telangana*, 252–57; C. Rajeshwar Rao, 'The Post-war Situation and Beginning of Armed Struggle', in *Peasant Struggle in India*, ed. A. R. Desai (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1979), 524.

150 APSA, NHD, Confidential, File no. 15/AND/54F (1944–45), part. I, 162.

151 For instance see, S. S. Harrison, 'Caste and the Andhra Communists' *The American Political Science Review* 50, no. 2, 1956, 378–404; Carolyn M. Elliott, 'Decline of a Patrimonial Regime: The Telangana Rebellion in India, 1946-51', *The Journal of Asian Studies* 34, no. 1, November 1974, 27–47; D. N. Dhanagare, *Peasant Movements in India, 1920–1950* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1983), 223–24.

Pavier's study of the movement has illuminated much about the ideological dogmas of the CPI Communist Party of India and its organisational problems, it says little about the self-mobilisation of the subaltern peasantry.[152] As a whole, these studies fail to show how caste and village community bonds played an important role in organising the movement. There is thus a great lacuna in the literature on the struggle that it is hoped will be filled by further study. Here, we shall limit ourselves to the role played by the Lambadas in the movement, focusing on their demand for land, their insurgent consciousness and organisational capacities within the armed struggle.

The Lambadas' first open revolt began in 1944 in Dharmapuram, Mundrai and Devaruppala villages of Jangaon taluka. Dharmapuram was an *agrahar* (grant to Brahmans) village assigned to a priest of Ramavaram village. Pusukuri Ragava Rao being a professional moneylender grabbed this agrahar through his fraudulent practices from the priest. In the vicinity of the village, the Lambadas cleared forests and brought eighty acres of dry land and twenty-five acres of wet land into cultivation. From 1931, Raghava Rao began to claim that the land was his patta after he took over the village from the priest.[153] The Lambadas had been confronting him and asserting their rights. In 1944, Raghava Rao tried to evacuate them by force, sending his *gundas* (strongmen) to occupy the fields and start to plough the land. The Lambadas, led by Jatoth Hanma and his brother Ramoji, attacked them violently, driving them out and damaging their agricultural implements.[154]

Next day, the Lambadas of Dharmapuram went to Mundrai to help their fellow Lambada cultivators who were fighting against Kathar Narasimha Rao, patwari of the village. There they were cultivating forty acres of dry land and thirty acres of wet land. They had also constructed for themselves a tank called Maidam Cheruvu that provided irrigation and ensured that the land yielded well. Seeing the fertility of this land, Narasimha Rao began to claim his patta right over it from 1942. He also tried to negotiate with the

152 Pavier, *The Telangana Movement*, 95–158.

153 APSA, NHD, Confidential, File no. 15/AND/54F (1944–45), part. I, 165; Sundarayya, *Veera Telangana*, 21.

154 APSA, NHD, Confidential, File no. 15/AND/54F (1944–45), part. I, 166.

Lambadas by offering the same measure of land in another inam village. But they refused the offer as that land was barren and far away from their thanda. Narasimha Rao then grabbed their land forcefully. In response, three thousand Lambadas gathered from ten nearby thandas and villages (about 300) at Mundrai with sticks and slings in support of their fellow Lambadas under the leadership of Dharavath Bhagya, Dharavat Panthulu, Dharavath Sangya and Dhavula. But the patwari, forewarned by the Dharmapuram incident, had brought seventy-five armed reserve police using his connections, and was able to crush them ruthlessly. Twenty Lambadas were arrested and brought to Jangaon; they were beaten and exhibited through the villages to terrify the people and warn them that the same would happen to any one who tried to assert his rights on land. The Lambadas ultimately got back their land after a long-drawn movement, which is generally called the Maidam Cheruvu Battle. They also forged a similar revolt against the maktadar of Devaruppalla and regained their land.[155]

The Lambadas also firmly asserted their kowl rights at Toorur village of Warangal district. They had been cultivating about 450 acres of wet and dry land there belonging to a local deshmukh, for the previous fifty or sixty years on a kowl basis. With the promulgation of the Asami Shikmi Act of 1945, which dictated that shikmidars be given land for a period of not less than six years, the deshmukh feared that his control over the land would be weakened. He therefore evicted the Lambadas from the land forcefully; the latter mobilised fellow labourers from the surrounding thandas and fought against the deshmukh to assert their kowl rights.[156]

Such a revolt was the first of its kind in the state after the Jodenghat revolt of the Gonds under Komaram Bheem's leadership in 1940 in the forest tracts of Adilabad district.[157] The revolt of the Lambadas not only sparked off the much wider Telangana armed struggle, but was also a source of inspiration to all sections of the toiling people. A fascinating illustration of the Lambadas' revolts

155 Ibid., 137, 166–67; Sundarayya, *Veera Telangana*, 21–22.

156 *Social Service among the Tribes and Backward classes in Hyderabad* (Hyderabad, 1948), 43.

157 Haimendorf, *Tribal Hyderabad*, 117–126.

before and during the armed struggle was given by the participants and leaders of that struggle.[158]

The Andhra Mahasabha, which was referred to as 'sangham' by the rural poor, played a significant role in transforming the Lambadas' simmering anger into the larger land struggle in the state on an organised basis.[159] It was formed in 1930 and was associated with the Jana Sangham, a literary society based in Hyderabad city that sought to spread Telugu consciousness from the 1920s. However, it became a platform for various political ideologies in the state as it accommodated Congress nationalists, Telugu nationalists, and Arya Samajists. From the middle of the 1930s, a section of the Mahasabha, particularly the youth, was increasingly influenced by Marxian ideology. This group had taken over the Mahasabha completely after 1944 under the leadership of Devulapalli Venkateshwara Rao, Arutla Ramachandra Reddy and Ravi Narayana Reddy. These leaders were liberal nationalist activists, who were campaigning against vetti, untouchability, bhagela, and excess revenue collection by the dominant peasants and village officials in the region; the protest was carried out within the Gandhian political framework. But later they were greatly influenced by the Marxian politics that was slowly coming to hold sway in the Andhra region of the Madras Presidency.[160]

Aware of the Lambadas' exploited lives, the Andhra Mahasabha recruited them in large numbers into the *sangham* (village committees). A night school was opened in Mundrai in March 1944 in which the Lambadas of the neighbouring villages were exposed to Marxian theories and forms of land struggles through songs and speeches.[161] Within a short time, these activities had a profound impact on the toiling Lambadas. Indeed it shook the officials. One official reported:

> The Lambadas are being badly trained and educated by communist workers. They say the land in question is theirs, that the tank is theirs

158 For instance, see Sundarayya, *Veera Telangana*; Venkateshwar Rao, *Telangana Prajala Sayudhaporaata Cheritra* ; Dasarathi Rangacharya, *Chillaradevullu* (in Telugu: Small Gods) (Hyderabad: Vishalandhra Publishing House, 1989).

159 APSA, NHD, Confidential, File no. 15/AND/54F (1944–45), part. I, 18.

160 Pavier, *The Telangana Movement*, 67–72, 89–90.

161 APSA, NHD, Confidential, File no. 15/AND/54 (1944–45), part. I, 159–170.

> because they had contributed their labour in constructing the tank, that the Desmukhs's Rice Factory is theirs because it was they who did all the manual labour in constructing the factory and lastly, because the land in question was made fertile by them, it must be in their possession and for it they would fight to the end.[162]

This new consciousness not only made them ally with other subaltern peasant communities but also to fight for related causes. The CID report stated:

> Abdul Latif Khan, C. I. of Bhongir, visited this village (Ramavaram) to enquire into the application submitted by the Deshmukh on 17-2-54F (1944). When he was conducting the enquiry in the village *Chavdi* (office) speaking to Kolees, Dhangars etc., unconcerned Lambadas interrupted and when the C. I. asked them to go away refused to go but on the other hand assaulted him.[163]

With the murder of Dhodi Komariah, a sangham activist, on 4 July 1946 at Kadavendi village of Jangaon taluka by the gundas of the most unpopular deshmukh, Visunuri Ramachandra Reddy, the CPI adopted the armed struggle and formed a *dalam* (armed squad). Simultaneously, there were parallel sanghams that solved local issues and spread communist ideology at the village level through popular songs and cultural forms.[164] These sanghams played a crucial role in converting local resistance into a larger armed struggle. The Lambadas of Darmapuram and Mundrai villages in Jangaon taluka and Nadapalli, Kondaprolu, Moddulakunta, and Veeraram villages in Myrialaguda taluka, who had started the first independent confrontation against the landlords, became radical activists in the dalam.[165] Once the movement reached a greater level of maturity, the Lambada thandas became the centre for dalam activities since they were scattered in forests and away from the main villages with unapproachable roads. In 1947, the CPI was banned in both Hyderabad State and Madras Presidency and there was strong suppression of the activists. In such a situation, the Lambada thandas became shelters for the dalam. Sundarayya reports that

162 Ibid., 165.

163 Ibid., 167.

164 Sundarayya, *Veera Telangana*, 9.

165 Ibid., 193.

Bhimla's and Watchya's houses in Vallabhapuram village of Suryapet taluka were secure, secret places for dalam activities throughout the movement, even after Nehru's military government came to power. The Lambada women folk played a crucial role in maintaining secrecy.[166] The whole movement was subject to the wrath of the state and the landlords. The state police and the *razakars* would torture them ruthlessly to ferret out information on the dalam activists.[167] A Lambada family was taken into police custody from Rajaram village in Nalgonda, alleging that they had been helping the dalam; they were harshly tormented to extract information, being made to stand and starve for days. When they collapsed, they were revived by splashing water and again subjected to the same treatment. In spite of extreme physical suffering, they did not relent. Finally, frustrated by their stubbornness, the police released them.[168]

The Lambada women played an active role in the movement. Sundarayya cites a number of incidents in which Lambada women took centre stage. Mangali, wife of Hamu, of Dharmapuram village, in Jangaon taluka, terrorised Babu Dora, son of Visnuri Ramachandra Reddy deshmukh, when he tried to attack their thanda and commit atrocities on the women. Once Mangali and her husband were captured by Dora and tortured severely to get information regarding her son Dhanu, who was a dalam activist. Babu Dora raided their thanda once again and shot dead one of her sons, Somla, in front of her. Her remaining four sons, Reddiya, Balaram, Chandu and Ramu were put behind bars; her daughters-in-law and grandsons were tortured and beaten ruthlessly many times by Dora. She, too, was imprisoned for three years. But she did not lose courage, and continued to fight against Dora. When Babu Dora was killed by the Lambadas after the installation of the military government in

166 Ibid., 196.

167 Razakars were activists of Majlis Ittehad, a militant voluntary force organised by Kasim Razvi to protect Muslims interest in the region. There were 30,000 enrolled Razakars in 1948. They had moral support from the Nizam and attacked communist villagers and terrorised people by burning villages, raping women, killing people and collecting levy, land revenue and excise duty. See Inukonda Thirumali, *Against Dora and Nizam: People's Movement in Telangana, 1939–1948* (New Delhi: Kanishka Publishers, Distributors, 2003), 155–60; Sundarayya, *Veera Telangana*, 159–67.

168 Ibid., 195.

Hyderabad by the Indian Union, Mangali spat repeatedly on his face. Her fight against Dora made her a legend in the region and inspired other Lambada women to participate in the struggle.[169]

Lachakka of Pusapally in Nalgonda was another inspiring Lambada woman. Her brothers were Ballu and Ramulu. When the military forced the Lambadas of Pusapally to vacate their thanda under the Briggs Programme, Ballu and Ramulu mobilised the Lambadas of the surrounding thandas and fought against the military. Ultimately, they were forced to vacate their thandas. Subsequently, Ballu and Ramulu became active members of the dalam. The police and the army harassed Lachakka to get information on her brothers. Nevertheless, she established links with the dalam and became their most trusted courier. She learnt to write and read, and married Veeraswamy, a member of the central committee of the dalam.[170]

It is difficult to delineate the Lambadas' participation in the armed struggle, as their revolt was an integral part of the larger movement. Nonetheless, it is clear that their participation in the organisation of both the sangham and the dalam was crucial in the success of both. In the CID report it was reported that the peasants' struggle was essentially a movement of the Lambadas and the Waddiras.[171]

After the military action on 17 September 1948, as a result of which Hyderabad State was merged into the Indian Union, the CPI struggled to clarify its ideological position on the various issues that arose from the decolonisation of India and the demise of Hyderabad State. There was an intense debate in the Party on future strategy and the question of armed resistance. Although it was decided to continue the armed struggle, the dalam began losing moral support from the mainstream activists and leaders of the CPI. The military government also further suppressed the dalam's activities. In the end, the armed struggle was withdrawn. Despite this, the subaltern peasants continued to seize land from the landlords.[172]

169 Ibid., 159, 198–99.

170 Ibid., 208–9.

171 APSA, NHD, Confidential, File no. 15/AND/54F (1944–45), part-I, 165.

172 D. N. Dhanagare, 'Social Origins of the Peasant Insurrection in Telangana (1946–51)', in *Peasant Struggle in India* ed. A. R. Desai (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1979), 505–13; Pavier, *The Telangana Movement*, 171.

When the military government was installed at Hyderabad, the landlords felt that it was their *rajyam* (government) and began to appropriate the confiscated lands from the subalterns with the help of the police. A Lambada family of Moddulakunta village, Miryalaguda taluka, had occupied land belonging to Ramakrishnamma, a landlord, during the armed struggle. After the military government came to power, she tried to take back the land with the help of the police and gundas, who seized the harvested crops. The Lambada man was severely beaten up and fell unconscious. But his wife fought courageously and retrieved the harvest. Similar revolt was witnessed at Kondaprolu and Vadapalli villages of Miryalaguda taluka as well as at many other places.[173]

Despite violent suppression, many Lambadas and other subalterns regained their land. In the beginning, the Lambadas had asserted their rights over the land using their own community bonds and methods. But later on, increasingly, they adopted the Marxian form of agrarian revolt and allied with other subaltern communities in the villages. Even then, long-established caste and village community bonds still had their part to play. Landlords suffered caste boycotts in which the various subaltern castes and communities stopped providing services to them. Because of such solidarity, it was extremely hard for the landlords' strongmen and state police to enter the villages, and many landlords surrendered their land voluntarily. Sundarayya quotes many such incidents, in which peasants mobilised on the basis of caste and village community bonds and asserted their rights.[174]

The introduction of the rule of property in land thus had created a vicious circle, as a result of which the subalterns were dispossessed of their land. Although the Telangana landlords were often compared to medieval feudal lords, and they indeed deployed longstanding caste practices and prejudices to bolster their position, their landlordism was the product of the so-called modern revenue system and the colonial capitalist economy. The Lambadas gained extensive property rights in land through the new revenue system, but much of this passed subsequently into the hands of the landlords. This process was also one that was made possible by the new land

173 Sundarayya, *Veera Telangana*, 193.

174 Ibid., 50–88.

revenue system. The higher-level state authorities tried to intervene in the matter, but the local administrative structure was highly corrupt and closely allied with the landlords, and almost nothing was achieved to alleviate the suffering of the Lambada peasantry. Eventually, they took to armed revolt. This situation, along with the growing popularity of Marxist ideology within the state, led to the state to align itself unambiguously with the landlords to suppress the armed revolt. The process of peasantisation of the Lambadas thus subalternised them still further. However, this process not only united their community at many levels but also helped them to establish close relations with other subaltern rural communities. In this, they acted as a part of the village community, despite their thandas, or settlements, being scattered away from the main village sites. In fact, the process of their integration within the village community had begun far back, in the early nineteenth century. This will be discussed in the next chapter.

5

Articulating Cultural Differences, Contesting Power

The Consolidation of the Lambadas as a Social and Political Entity

With their nomadic way of life under threat from the 1820s onwards, and their gradual realignment within different social spaces, the Lambadas had to negotiate new social roles and identities for themselves. In particular, they sought to carve out a new position for themselves within the Hindu caste hierarchy. Two powerful cultural movements were launched to meet the new needs. The first, which began in the second quarter of the nineteenth century, was initiated by a religious saint, Seva Bhaya; and the second, in the first quarter of the twentieth century, by Lambadas who had received a school education . Seva Bhaya's movement, which preached values such as vegetarianism, cleanliness, and abstention from liquor, had a particularly profound impact on the community. His movement not only united the community into a single force for the first time, but also created a new consciousness and paved the way for a new cultural assertion. In both movements, the spiritual culture of the Lambadas was articulated and rearticulated in order to unite and mobilise the community.[1]

1 APSA, NHD, Confidential, Inst. 47, List 10, S. no. 777, File no. 620/1939, 1–13; Bilgrami, *Historical and Descriptive Sketch*, I: 337–347.

This phenomenon was seen on a wide scale among the subaltern communities of colonial India from the middle of the nineteenth century onwards. Indeed, colonial rule created a stage for innumerable alternative articulations and histories, in which castes/communities adopted certain alternative cultural values either to challenge colonial power and the domination of Brahmanism, or to become a part of the colonial establishment and the caste-Hindu society. What was forged as a result was a synthesis of old and new, with some older cultural markers finding a place alongside the articulation of new community values and ambitions.[2] To some extent, the newly adopted values were those of Brahmanical Hinduism, and to this extent the process may be seen to conform to Srinivas's model of sanskritisation.[3] And yet, the process also represented an act of assertion that challenged the caste hierarchy as it was then constituted. The process was thus full of tension.

This chapter examines how the Lambadas came to embrace these new cultural and spiritual values, and how this process created a new social and political consciousness. This involved in part the rearticulation of their oral traditions and history. We shall also see how the Lambadas used the new consciousness and identity to deal with the modern apparatus of the state. We may start by looking at the genealogy of the Lambadas' spiritual culture in order to understand the new consciousness and identity articulations more clearly.

THE GENEALOGY OF THE LAMBADAS' SPIRITUAL CULTURE

Written sources of the time tell us little about the spiritual cultural practices of the Lambadas during the early caravan days. At best, we have very scanty and fragmented descriptions by European travellers. However, the late nineteenth and twentieth century ethnographic notes do give us some insights on the preceding periods as they include detailed descriptions about the spiritual practices of the Lambadas. Apart from these notes, there is a wealth of oral evidence on their early spiritual practices, as well as Seva Bhaya's movement,

2 Mayaram, *Against History*, 235; Hardiman, *The Coming of the Devi*, 164.

3 Srinivas, *Social Change*, 7.

in the form of songs and *sakies* (stories), which has been well documented by the colonial ethnographers and recent folklore studies.

The Lambada community had a strong oral tradition from their caravan days. At the beginning of the nineteenth century Briggs says that:

> Among their habits is one which is remarkable, and comes in strong confirmation of their own accounts...and this is the fact of each horde of any size having a *Bhatt*, or bard, who recounts in metrical rhapsodies the actions of their forefathers, and is the principal actor in all festivals; he plays on a kind of guitar, and the airs are some of them very pretty. The Bhatts are common, even at the present time, among the people of Marwar; and both facts confirm the tradition of the Bunjara histories. This retention of their habits and native tongue for several centuries is perhaps one of the most remarkable instances of the kind to be found in any history, when we consider that they have no written records, and, unless among themselves no intercourse in the language.[4]

Each Lambada thanda had a bhatt who preserved their traditions from the caravan days. This practice continues even today.

In his *Travels in India*, Tavernier provides us with a glimpse of the caravanners' spiritual culture during the precolonial period. He noted that:

> The priests who follow them set up in the most beautiful parts of the plain where they are encamped, an idol in the form of a serpent, entwined about a staff of six or seven feet in height, and each one in order goes to make reverence to it, the girls turning round it three times. After all have passed, the priests take care to remove the idol and to load it on an ox assigned for that purpose.[5]

Here the allusion is apparently to *Naga*, or snake, worship. Snake worship probably developed among the caravanners because of their cattle-raising practice. C. William Crooke mentions that the snake gods in the Punjab and Western United Provinces were believed to have great power over milch cattle in the nineteenth

4 Briggs, 'Account of the Origin', 173.

5 Tavernier, *Travels in India*, I: 35.

century.[6] The Census Report of 1881 for Berar mentions that a section of the Lambadas in the region also worshipped snake gods.[7] However, most of the ethnographic notes of the nineteenth century observed that the Lambadas mainly worshipped the goddess Marri-Ai (Merramma).[8] A. C. Lyall noted that the Lambadas of the Deccan were Hindus and worshipped Merramma, Tulja Devi, Guru Nanak, and Balaji, besides their religious holy men Seva Bhaya, Mittu Bhukya and Sati, and that among them Guru Nanak was supreme.[9] All the ethnographic notes, gazetteers and census reports of the later period also state the same thing. It was also noted that these gods and goddesses were worshipped either in the form of a stone idol or as a silver piece of insignia with various names in different regions. During the caravan days, it was a regular practice to sacrifice a goat or a hen to the goddess when leaving an encampment.[10]

These observations are supported by their oral literature. This in fact provides us with a much better understanding of their spiritual culture, which was based primarily on the worship of seven mother goddesses known as the *Sathi Bhavani*. Individually, they were known as Tolja, Kankali, Hingla, Mantral, Dholangar, Amba and Merramma. They worshiped them annually as well as on all social occasions, in addition to their ancestors and *bhagats* (devotees/medicine men). A goat was sacrificed to the goddesses whenever the thanda was visited by epidemics.[11] Among the goddesses, Merramma was more popular than the others and considered the most powerful; it was believed that if a goat was not sacrificed annually or as promised, it would cause sickness in the family and an epidemic in the thanda. Every thanda had one bhagat of Merramma, who also acted as the naik. Whenever someone was ill, he/she would consult a bhagat.

6 C. William Crook, *An Introduction to the Popular Religion of Northern India* (Allahabad: Government Press, North-western Provinces and Oudh, 1898), 268.

7 *Census of Hyderabad Assigned Districts 1881* (Bombay: Education Society's Press, 1882), 43.

8 Balfour, *The Cyclopaedia of India*, 270.

9 Lyall, *Gazetteer for the Haidarabad*, 199.

10 For instance see Crooke, *The Tribes and Castes*, I: 152; Hassan, *The Castes and Tribes*, 25; Thurston, *Tribes and Castes*, IV: 229.

11 D. R. Pratap, *Festivals of Banjaras* (Hyderabad: Tribal Cultural Research and Training Institute, Tribal Welfare Department, A.P., 1972), 30.

The bhagat would prescribe some herbs and chant a few mantras in the first instance. If the illness persisted, it was attributed to Merramma or a *dakanti* (woman sorcerer) and a sacrifice had to be performed to the goddess.[12]

As the oral evidence shows, the main, long-standing religious ceremonies of the Lambadas were *Seethala* and *Teej*, during which the goddesses were worshiped through established rituals. Seethala, the cattle protector, whom we have discussed already in chapter 3, was worshipped every year in July or August, when contagious diseases were widespread in the region. The celebration would take place on a fixed day. The naik would erect seven stones representing the seven deities in the order of their birth under a Bauhenia spicata tree and one representing their brother, Lukidiya, at a distance of about thirty feet just opposite to them. The naik would then sacrifice a goat, and spill the blood before the seven deities. The body of the sacrificed goat was placed in front of the seven deities and its intestines drawn out of the abdomen and stretched up to the idol of Lukidiya and tied there to a peg. A man would then beat the *nangara* (traditional musical instrument) and vessels to frighten the cattle from the temporary cattle pen, which was put up on the eastern side of the deities. As the cattle ran over the intestines, the men would sprinkle boiled grain mixed with the blood of the sacrificed goat over the cattle. After completing all the rites, the thanda members would eat together in the surrounding fields before dispersing.[13]

The Teej ceremony was celebrated as a festival of fertility during the rainy season. It was performed with utmost religiosity and spread over nine days, with vigorous ritual dances performed to the tune of melodious religious songs on Merramma (and on Seva Bhaya later). The unmarried girls of the thanda would grow wheat in small baskets called teej, which would be watered and nurtured and then thrown into the water (a nearby lake) on the ninth day. A goat would be sacrificed to Merramma on the last day of the ceremony.[14] The Lambadas celebrated almost all the main Hindu festivals such as Holi, Diwali and Dasara, but in their own style.

12 Balfour, *The Cyclopaedia of India*, I: 271.

13 Pratap, *Festivals of Banjaras*, 32.

14 Ibid., 11–26.

Whatever the festival, it was considered imperative to sacrifice a goat to Merramma.[15]

Most sources suggest that besides sacrificing animals to the goddess, the Lambadas also attended the Balaji temple in Thirupathi and the Sikh gurdwara in Nanded.[16] It is said that they began to worship Balaji during their long stay in the region (Chittore, Anantapur and Bellarry) at the time of the Karnataka and Mysore wars. As discussed in Chapter 2, the Lambadas accompanied the Nizam and the British army in this region from the 1740s to 1800. In fact, one Hathiram became a great devotee of Balaji and there is a legend to accompany this. According to legend, the Lambadas grazed their cattle in the hills and forests which surround the Balaji temple. Among them, was Hathiram, who became a devotee of Balaji; he soon came to spend his life in the temple. It is said that Balaji used to play chess with Hathiram. His devotion was recognised by the temple priest and later a temple was built in his name to the right of the Lord's temple. Even today, the Lambadas who visit the temple first go to Hathiram's temple and then to Balaji's temple. Unlike other devotees, the Lambadas would perform a *bhog* (offering made of sweet rice and ghee to the fire) on the outskirts of the temple.[17]

Many Lambadas also followed the Sikh gurus and the Muslim ceremonies, especially the Peer (Moharam) festival. Guru Nanak was held in great reverence and many Lambadas participated in the annual celebrations at the gurdwara at Nanded.[18] According to one legend, the body of the ninth guru Tej Bahadur, who was executed by the Mughal ruler Aurangzeb, was brought from Chandni Chowk street in Delhi by Lambada caravanners, led by Lakhisa Banjara, and handed over to the Sikhs.[19] Their association with the Punjab region and the Nanded gurdwara produced six Lambada Sikh saints called *masand*: Loka Masand, Linga Masand, Teba Masand, Dooka Masand, Haree Masand and Gangla Masand. Among them, Linga

15 Hassan, *The Castes and Tribes*, 25.

16 Ibid., 25.

17 B. Chinniya Naik, *Banjara Charitra Smskruthi-Pragathi* (Telugu: Banjaras' History, Culture-Development) (Anantapur: Hathiram Bhavaji Publication, 1998), 117–121.

18 Bilgrami, *Historical and Descriptive Sketch*, I: 25.

19 Chinniya Naik, *Banjara Charitra*, 71–73.

and Loka were the most prominent; they preached Guru Nanak's philosophy among the Lambadas in Hyderabad State. They probably belonged to the eighteenth century. A temple in the name of Linga Masand still exists at Beebinagar (twenty-five km from Hyderabad city) and in the name of Loka Masand at the Thimmareddypally village of Maddur mandal in Mahbubnagar district. They practised strict vegetarianism, which distinguished them from the others, and worshipped Sathi Bhavani, besides attending the Sikh temple at Nanded annually.[20]

The Peer festival was also fairly popular among the Lambadas. Karen Leonard has argued that the long Muslim rule (Qutb Shahis and Asaf Jahis) produced a peculiar culture in the south, which she calls the 'deccani synthesis'. In fact such a synthesis occurred all over India, being brought about by an interaction between Islam and other Indian religious traditions that had continued for almost a thousand years. Many people celebrated the Peer festival irrespective of their religion.[21] In fact, in the Marathwada region of the state, there was a Lambada Muslim sect called the Dhadi Banjaras, which was believed to have come from Multan; they were originally transporters and mythological story-tellers to the Lambadas. In the course of time, many of them became a part of the community. They worshipped the Lambada goddesses, and visited Mecca and ate beef like the other Muslims.[22] Although the Lambadas participated in the religious practices of the larger society, they strictly continued to worship their own goddesses. The masands and bhagats were great devotees of Merramma, even though they visited the Sikh and Balaji temples.

It is clear from all this that blood sacrifice played a central role in the religious culture of the Lambadas. From around the eighteenth century, some members of the community began to embrace less violent practices. This had little impact at that time, for neither the Masands of the Sikh Gurus nor the bhagats of Balaji had much long-term influence on Lambada society in general. The strategy adopted in the nineteenth century by Seva Bhaya was, however,

20 Ruplanaik, *Colourful Banjaras*, 229.

21 Karen Leonard, 'The Deccani Synthesis in Old Hyderabad: An Historiographic Essay', *Journal of the Pakistan Historical Society* XXI, October 1973, 205–218.

22 Lyall, *Gazetteer for the Haidarabad*, 200.

much more influential. He chose to become bhagat of Merramma, the beloved goddess of the Lambadas, and eventually attained a superior position superior even to Merramma in the Lambadas' spiritual world. This allowed him to lead the Lambadas towards a more non-violent ethos, so that they could assert their culture in a new way, as well as to claim a superior position within the Hindu caste hierarchy. Let us now turn to see how Seva Bhaya achieved this.

TECHNOLOGIES OF SELF AND CULTURAL ASSERTION

Kachereer Paachen Kaadesh
Sahukaarer Samnaken Kaadesh[23]

(Oh! Goddess save us from oppressive police surveillance and restore our honour and respect in the eyes of the sahukars and the public.)

The Lambadas are said to have chanted these words before the goddess Merramma from the earliest times. In fact, this prayer probably reflects their condition in the nineteenth century, when many Lambadas experienced their lives as being ruled by brutal police persecution and highly exploitative moneylenders. The prayer, in this form, was almost certainly informed by the movement for moral and spiritual change led by Seva Bhaya in the early to mid-nineteenth century. In negotiating a new relationship between the Lambadas and Merramma, this movement provided the moral resources for the community to tackle grave problems such as these—as well as other contemporary predicaments—through the adoption of what may be defined as a new 'self-technology.'

The term 'self-technology' was deployed by Foucault to signify technologies that permit individuals to effect, by their own means or with the help of others, a certain number of operations on their own bodies and souls, thoughts, conduct, and the way of being, so as to transform themselves in order to attain a certain state of happiness, purity, wisdom, perfection or immortality.[24] The

23 Ruplanaik, *Colourful Banjara*, 126.

24 Foucault, 'Technologies of the Self', 18.

Lambadas sought to adopt such a self-technology in which they tried to change their spiritual and social culture values in order to appear sober to the police, to stand up against the moneylenders, and to appear respectable in the eyes of their neighbours. Interestingly, their own spirituality served as a tool in their self-imposed reform. Seva Bhaya's movement can be seen to exemplify this.

Seva Bhaya (whom the Lambadas called Great Brother) was a holy bhagat of the Merramma goddess, who was widely worshipped by the Lambadas of Hyderabad State. It is said that Seva Bhaya led a spiritual life from his childhood and became a vegetarian and abstained from liquor. Surprisingly, these two practices were quite opposed to Merramma's likes as she was fond of blood sacrifices and *daru* (liquor). Nevertheless, Seva Bhaya had to fight against her desire for blood and daru. There is an elaborate story about this fight, which spread Seva Bhaya's message about vegetarianism and abstaining from liquor among the Lambada community, which we shall narrate in the succeeding paragraphs. It is reported in many texts of the late nineteenth century that his message influenced many across the region. Seva Bhaya died at Pohur, four miles from Diras in Wun district of Berar (presently in Akola district). His family constructed two temples side by side, one for him, and one in honour of Merramma, which was officiated over by his nephew, Suka Bhaya, during the 1870s. He has subsequently become a spiritual symbol of the Lambada community, and Pohur a place of pilgrimage, where Lambadas come from across the region to worship their beloved deity.[25]

It is difficult to establish the exact dates of Seva Bhaya's movement. But Major K. Mackenzie, who has described his life at considerable length, gives us some clues about this period. He writes that 'the love borne by Mari Mata, the goddess of cholera, for the handsome Siva Rathor, is an event of our own times (1874).'[26] The oral narration about Seva Bhaya reveals some fascinating facts about his movement and the period. The story goes that the place of his birth and death were Gutti-Bellary and Pohur, respectively, and his family supplied

25 Lyall, *Gazetteer for the Haidarabad*, 199; also see *Census of Hyderabad Assigned Districts 1881*, 154.

26 Russell, *Tribes and Castes*, II: 177. It is also reproduced in *Census of Hyderabad Assigned Districts 1881*, 154.

grain to the Nizam's armies that were fighting against Tippu. After the Mysore War (1799), they moved to the Maratha region, as the army was waging war against the Marathas, which ended in 1824.[27] It is most likely that his movement was launched during the second decade of the nineteenth century. The oral literature of the Lambada community offers us interesting insights into his sustained fight with Merramma, which ended to Seva Bhaya's advantage, establishing his superiority over her.

According to the narration—which we will place, as is the custom, in the present tense—Seva Bhaya is the son of Bheema Naik and Dharmani Bai, who own 3,751 cattle. They have considerable wealth, but no children. Dharmani Bai worships the Sathi Bhavani and asks the goddesses to bless her with a child. Pleased with her devotion, they grant her wish. But Merramma, one of the seven Goddesses, lays down the condition that the first son should become her bhagat when he is twelve years old. Bheema Naik agrees to her condition. Sevalal is born first to Bheema and Dharmani, and then three more sons, Hapa, Badhu and Bhana.[28] Bheema Naik was attached to the army, therefore he and his family move along with it: from Gutti-Ballary to Sirsagad (Sirsi Kota) then to Nimagaon (near Nizamabad), to Soorkhand (Orissa region), to Hyderabad (where they were probably attached to the Nizam's army in the last Maratha War), to the Nandgaon area in Aurangabad district and finally to Ruegad in the Marathwada region of Hyderabad State. Soon Sevalal is twelve years of age, but Bheema Naik is unwilling to keep his promise. One day, Merramma appears before Bheema Naik and reminds him of it. He denies any knowledge and requests Merramma to persuade Sevalal herself. The goddess responds angrily that she will certainly do this and disappears.

Sevalal used to take the cattle for grazing in the forest with his friends. One day, the goddess appears in his dream and asks him to

27 Chinniya Naik, *Banjara Charitra*, 100–110.

28 The birthplace is identified as Savagad (fifteen km from Gutti mandal of Anantapur district in A.P) by the All India Banjara Sava Sangh (1953) activists. See *Souvenir of Golden Jubilee Celebrations of All India Banjara Seva Sangh*, 31 January, 2004, at Digras, Yeotmal district, Maharashtra (hereafter Golden Jubilee Souvenir of AIBSS), 92; I personally visited the place on the day of jatara (14 February 2005) during my field study.

be her bhagat. Sevalal refuses saying: 'I have no problem with being your bhagat but your offerings are blood and daru and I cannot offer you either. I can only serve you with utmost *bhakti* (devotion).' Further, he says, 'you are the mother of the earth. All species on the earth are like your children. Is it correct for you to ask for their blood? Oh! *Mata* (mother), you are a great goddess and I do not think that the sacrifice of these unfortunate animals satisfy you.' Merramma becomes angry at his reply and is determined to make him her bhagat by hook or by crook. The goddess begins to torture him. She kills his brother, Bhana, and destroys their 3,751 cattle and their entire wealth. She deprives Sevalal of even a single morsel of boiled rice. One day, she appears before him in her divinity and he is awed by her splendour. Ultimately, Sevalal agrees to become her bhagat on the condition that he does not have to offer her daru and sacrifices; Merramma agrees. The goddess blesses Sevalal, and Bhana is brought back to life and all their possessions are returned. Thus the goddess consents to all his conditions, and Sevalal becomes her bhagat.

As the days pass, Sevalal becomes very popular among the devotees, and stories about his magic and miracles spread across the region. With his supernatural powers, Sevalal almost supersedes the goddess. The Lambadas begin to worship him in place of Merramma. The goddess becomes angry. She plots to reduce the influence that he has on the devotees through his supernatural powers, which, she believes, will probably be reduced if he marries and loses his chastity. Merramma proposes that Sevalal marry her. But he refuses and replies that he can neither marry her nor any other girl, as many are his devotees, and the girls of his community consider him their Great Brother. The arguments and counter-arguments continue between Sevalal and Merramma for a long time. Finally, Merramma proposes that Lord Mahadev should determine whether he is genuinely celibate. Sevalal agrees to her proposal, provided he has to stay in heaven only for three days.

Sevalal calls his brothers and requests them to prepare a bed of neem leaves. He lies down on the bed and tells his brothers not to wake him for three days till he gets up himself, and says that songs and prayers could be sung during the three-day period. Sevalal visits heaven with Merramma. Both of them plead their case before Lord Mahadev. Somehow the Lord is inclined towards Sevalal, and he

tells Merramma to free him to lead a celibate's life. Sevalal is happy to hear the verdict. But Merramma is humiliated and becomes very angry; she is determined to take revenge on Sevalal. She asks Sevalal to wait in heaven for a while and returns to earth. She transforms herself into an old woman and goes to Sevalal's mother Dharmanibai. Merramma tells her that her son Sevalal died three days ago at Pohur. Dharmanibai becomes sorrowful and tries to wake up Sevalal by touching his body. The body springs alive three times and falls down and dies. A pyre of sandalwood is made for his funeral. Sevalal wakes up from the funeral and chants his last words to his brethren: '*gor-bhai* (Lambada-brothers), do not be scared; establish your thandas at least one or two miles away from the villages. Do not perform animal sacrifices. Do not have daru. Do not go to a hundred doctors. If you swallow my holy *rak* (ash) from the hearth there in front of the temple all your diseases will be cured.'[29]

The story reveals that the Lambadas faced great distress during the first half of the nineteenth century, as Seva Bhaya's family lost everything during the period. Indeed his family's loss and revival is a reminder of the economic slump and crisis of this period. Importantly, the story suggests that there was a profound spiritual transformation among the Lambada community during the period: they changed from meat eaters and performers of animal sacrifices to vegetarianism; from intoxication to abstinence; from un-cleanliness to cleanliness. Merramma, who symbolised blood sacrifices and intoxication, was replaced by Seva Bhaya who symbolised more sober values. Seva Bhaya, who presented a human face in his dialogue with the goddess, thus acquired a superior moral position in the eyes of the Lambadas. It was through this moral superiority that Seva Bhaya transformed the Lambadas. Indeed, the strict sexual purity and adherence to certain values brought honour to him and to his words. In Seva Bhaya's spiritual fight, Mahadev (Lord Siva) seemed to support him. Also, in his last words, Seva Bhaya asked the

29 In recounting this story, which as popularly narrated is very long, I have provided a summary while trying to preserve its essence. See *Census of Hyderabad Assigned Districts 1881*, 153–4; Russell, *Tribes and Castes*, II: 177; Chinniya Naik, *Banjara Charitra*, 100–110; D. B. Naik, *The Art and Literature of Banjara Lambanis: A socio-cultural Study* (New Delhi: Abhinav Publication, 2000), 53–58.

Lambadas to use his ashes as a panacea, and ash is associated with Siva. This seems to suggest Shaivite influences and that Seva Bhaya was leading them towards forms of Siva Bhakti, which has a large following in caste-Hindu society, particularly in the south. However, this should not be interpreted to mean that he led the Lambadas towards Siva Bhakti. In fact, his main quest, as evident from the above narration, was to establish values in Lambada society that were acceptable and respectable in the caste-Hindu society, setting the stage for the Lambadas' new self-assertion. This certainly helped them win greater social acceptability.

However, when Seva Bhaya launched his movement, there was considerable opposition from the community to the new values that he preached. Many Lambadas found fault with Seva Bhaya and his new order. He was put to many tests in order to prove his *myhimas* (powers). It is said that when Seva Bhaya was in Kaandya Gatla (a place in Warangal district), Chaampa Naik, a Vadatya naik of a nearby thanda, got Chingarya, a boy, to dress up as a woman. The boy is taken to Seva Bhaya to ask that a son be born to him. Seva Bhaya had already been forewarned about this visit by Merramma, who told him that he should bless the boy stating that seven sons would be born to him. On their way back from Seva's house, the party realises that Chingarya had really became a woman. They return to Seva Bhaya and beg his pardon and plead that he takes back his 'blessing'. Seva Bhaya expresses his inability to do so.[30] There are a number of such stories in which his opponents are bested. It is probable that when a new order is imposed on a certain society, there will be some opposition from some in the community. But, in the course of time, a consensus is reached and the whole community comes to accept this as the desirable norm. Although Seva Bhaya had his detractors in the beginning, he gained popularity later as stories of his power and miracles spread.

A good number of stories were articulated by the community around Seva Bhaya's miracles. The Lambadas drew strength from these stories when they had to interact with the police, zamindars and local powers in their day-to-day lives. The popularity of such miracle stories went beyond the Lambada community. It is said that Seva Bhaya used his miraculous powers to rescue the Lambadas

30 Ruplanaik, *Colourful Banjara*, 222.

from the officials of the Nizam and the Raja of Soorkhand when their cattle were stopped.[31]

There is a story regarding how Seva Bhaya fought with the Nizam's police. According to the story, the officials are impounding the cattle of the Lambadas when they traverse through fields of peasants with their herds. When they do this, Seva Bhaya releases the cattle immediately using his power. The police are scared of his powers and dare not punish either him or Lambadas of his thanda. The only way to counter him is to murder him, and the police make plans to poison him and the thanda members. One day, the police party comes to Seva Bhaya and offers him some sweets that they say the Nizam has sent for him, but actually these sweets are laced with poison. Seva Baya who is clairvoyant, realises that the sweets contain poison and asks the police to eat them first. The police abandon the sweets and run away. From then onwards, the police stop harassing them.[32]

Seva Bhaya encouraged the Lambadas to be non-violent in their struggles with their persecutors, using moral authority rather than force. Many songs were sung on Seva Bhaya's miracles, and it was through these songs that his message of social transformation was spread among the people. To cite an example:

Sevabhaya jalmo
Sir puri banyo
Nizagamen garashiya chodayo
Yaragadda pataliyar sanadlido
Chingariyan chingari banayo
Zoorer zaj terayo
Swargem devin harayo
Kawomat pivomat darunabotti
Sevabhayane dhaavo[33]

(After the birth of Seva Bhaya
Sweet dish and fried flattened bread made out of mud
Freed the uncastrated bull at Nimagaon
Got a decree from the village chief at Yaragadda
A Chingarya boy was changed into a girl

31 Chinniya Naik, *Banjara Charitra*, 108–10.
32 Ibid., 105.
33 Ibid., 101; D. B. Naik, *The Art and Literature*, 54.

Rescued the ship of Zoori
Defeated the Goddess in heaven
Do not eat meat, do not drink daru
Worship Seva Bhaya.)

The song refers to a time of distress when Seva Bhaya went to the bank of the river and made a sweet dish of bread out of mud and offered it to Merramma. Once when his family was at Nimagaon near Nizamabad, his uncastrated bull (Garasiya Sandiya) was driven away by the Bhils, who chained the animal's legs. When Seva Bhaya went to Nimagaon and called the bull by its name, the chains slipped off and it escaped from the Bhils and returned home. In Yaragadda village of Mahbubnagar, the Lambadas' cattle ate up the crops of the village chief, who arrested the cowherds and confiscated their cattle. When Seva Bhaya learnt of this arrest, he went to the chief and requested him to free the cattle and the grazers, but the chief insisted that unless he was paid some compensation for the loss of the crops he would not free them. Then Seva Bhaya said that he should himself study the damage and estimate the loss. When the chief returned to the field, he was surprised to find that his crops were untouched. He was astonished at Seva Bhaya's miraculous powers and issued a decree to facilitate his long stay in the area. Another line of the song talks of Zoori, who was a famous trader of pearls and diamonds in Bombay. His ship, which was sailing with the precious cargo, was caught up in a terrible storm. Zoori prayed to all the gods, but it was of no avail. He prayed to Seva Bhaya and his ship was rescued from danger. Later Zoori presented all his wealth to Seva Bhaya.[34]

A number of such songs on his supernatural power and messages were sung on different social and religious occasions. Every happiness in life was attributed to Seva Bhaya's blessings, including the birth of a child. He was seen as a great liberator of all hurdles. One song goes:

Ajo ajo sevadas karure arads
Gor zhurare bhaya tarevas
Ajo ajo Bhimarotu bala
Kana layis bhaya taroredal

34 Ibid., 56–57; Chinniya Naik, *Banjara Charitra*, 101–3.

Ravnere saru ramero avatar

.....

Gokulema jalmo ghanshyam[35]

(O! Sevalal, I worship and serve you
Grace me with your vision
The Lambadas serve and worship you
Be yourself the protector to them
You are the dear son of Bheema
When would you appear before me
Rama's incarnation was for the good of people
So also your incarnation was for the good of the Lambadas)

Seva Bhaya's birth was thus equated with that of Lord Sri Rama.

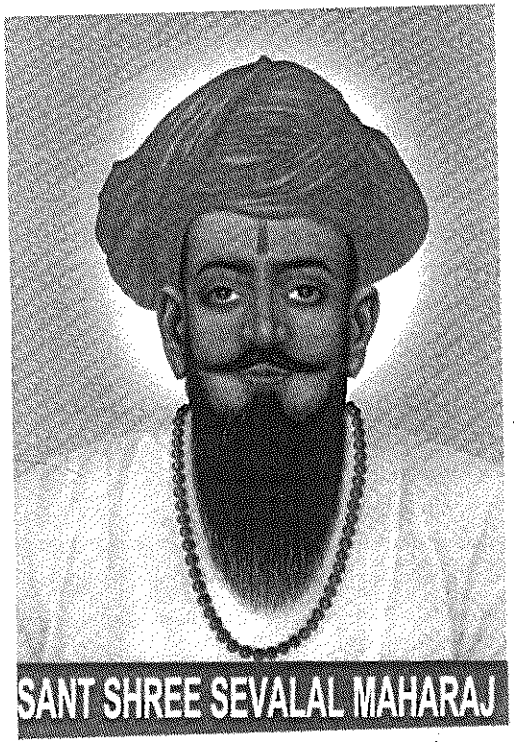


ILLUSTRATION 5: A modern, imagined, depiction of Seva Bhaya. My own collection from field study.

35 D. B. Naik, *The Art and Literature*, 33.

ILLUSTRATION 6: Photograph of Lambadas celebrating Seva Bhaya's birthday. My own collection from field study.

The movement played a dual role: it reformed the Lambada community and paved the way for self-assertion of the community. It was reported that 'in 1860s the Lambada society was developing in the direction of heterodoxy in religious ideas, all attendant rites and ceremonies.'[36] After the death of Seva Bhaya, two temples (usually huts) were built in his and Merramma's name side by side in every Lambada thanda; a bamboo pole was also erected on the premises on which white and green/red flags were hoisted white for Seva Bhaya and green or red for Merramma. It was believed that these flags would protect the thanda from epidemics like cholera. Interestingly, every thanda had a bhagat, mostly the naik, who looked after the temple's rituals and followed all strictures of Seva Bhaya on vegetarianism and abstention from liquor; some followed celibacy as well.[37] Only sweet food and ghee were offered to Seva Bhaya. Usually, a hearth was prepared in front of the temple and

36 Bilgrami, *Historical and Descriptive Sketch*, I: 340.

37 Lyall, *Gazetteer for the Haidarabad*, 199.

the cooked food and ghee offered to the burning embers.[38] This practice replaced the earlier rituals of animal sacrifice and making an offering of liquor. Additionally, they were also revered as law-givers and medicine men healing both men and cattle.[39] In 1873, *The Times of India* reports:

> Each society of Brinjaries called a tanda, has a high priest, who, like a Llama of Thibet, or the more ancient chief of the Babylonian hierarchy, is an object of reverence and adoration. He leads a very reserved, contemplative, and sacred life, preserving strict celibacy. The influence exercised by him is, of course, very considerable, as he is believed to be omniscient, and any transgression of his wish is supposed to involve punishment both in this and in the world to come.[40]

This sort of lofty depiction of the subaltern communities was common in all the colonial texts and in the press. But it also reveals how the Lambadas' long-established thanda panchayats were coming into their own. We have very scanty sources to tell us how the state actually responded to this movement. Hardiman's study on the Devi movement of the adivasis in Western India suggests that the higher officials often tolerated such movements as a form of welcome self-reform that would 'civilise' the subaltern, while the subordinate officials who directly dealt with the peasants, and who preferred to maintain a status quo in which they could oppress them, showed considerable hostility. However, as the state revenues dropped because of their abstention from liquor, and they resisted working in the fields of the dominant rural classes, the higher officials began suppressing their movement in some areas.[41] In the case of the Lambadas, the state was very hostile to them, largely because the thanda panchayat functioned autonomously under the leadership of the bhagat/naik. This sort of assertion challenged the state's power, particularly with regard to implementation of the civil and criminal code among the Lambadas. The bhagats were long-established leaders of the Lambada society, but Seva Bhaya's movement further reinforced their power and influence.

38 Hassan, *The Castes and Tribes*, 25.

39 Times of India, 23 January 1873, in Syed Mahdi Ali, *Hyderabad Affairs*, V: 331.

40 Ali, V: 331.

41 Hardiman, *The Coming of the Devi*, 177–181.

As we have mentioned above, the bhagats were often also the naiks of the thanda, and exercised considerable power over the thanda because of their spiritual prowess. As a part of their ritual, Seva Bhaya or Merramma entered the bhagat's body and inspired him to utter oracles, and also dispense herbal medicine.[42] In this way, the bhagats/naiks carried on the legacy of Seva Bhaya in rescuing people from not only evil spirits but also 'real' evil men such as liquor contractors, moneylenders, English medicine (colonial medicine), missionaries and police and forest officials. Historically, the Lambadas had created their own alternative judicial and governing systems. They settled their civil and criminal disputes themselves in their own thanda panchayats.[43] This provided a problem for the state when it tried to extend its power over the thandas. In 1869, it was reported that Roopa Naik, a resident of a thanda twelve miles from Hunmkonda town, seized his debtor, a Lambada of the neighbouring thanda, and killed him for refusing to pay his debt. This news somehow reached the ears of the state authority, and the tahsildar of Ramgeer came to arrest Roopa Naik. To the police party's surprise, the whole thanda, including the victim's thanda, opposed the arrest of Roopa Naik saying that 'he had done no wrong to the government. He neither plundered its country nor occasioned it loss; the government has nothing to say to his affair, which was a quarrel exclusively between Banjara and Banjara.'[44]

Such consciousness and assertions are hardly tolerated by any modern state, and ultimately the powers of the naiks/bhagats were suppressed by force. We do not have sufficient evidence to elaborate the methods used by the state to suppress them. Nonetheless, it was reported at the end of the nineteenth century that 'against these divine prophets policeman had waged necessary and not unsuccessful war.'[45] It was also reported at the same time that:

> Till recently the word of these great chiefs was never questioned, but the levelling influences of our rule have begun to tell, and in one notable instance, recently our Civil Code was appealed to as a

42 James Hastings, *Encyclopaedia of Religion and Ethics* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1909), II: 347.

43 Bilgrami, *Historical and Descriptive Sketch*, I: 341.

44 Syed Mahdi Ali, *Hyderabad Affairs*, V: 787.

45 Bilgrami, *Historical and Descriptive Sketch*, I: 342.

> greater chief than all...They will pass away like our Highland clans, comparison with whom suggests much in common, and with them will go some good that can hardly be spared, and some evil that will certainly be otherwise replaced.[46]

Although Hyderabad State appreciated the new values that were evolving in the Lambada society, it did not spare the members when they turned against its authority. Nevertheless, Seva Bhaya's cultural movement had imbued the Lambada community with new values. Above all, it brought the fragmented Lambadas together for the first time on one platform, strengthening the bond through a new form of spiritual order. This spiritual order was to play a fundamental role in a later politics of identity of the Lambada community to which we shall now turn.

FROM RELIGIOUS REFORM TO IDENTITY POLITICS

The Lambadas' spiritual and cultural reform movement fed into a new and more secular politics of community assertion that emerged from the 1920s. Being focused above all on the interests of one community, it can be defined as a form of identity politics. Such a politics of caste identity was widespread all over India from the start of the twentieth century. For the Lambadas, it was initiated and led by a new class of educated young men. Although the economic and political changes witnessed in the state under the paramountcy of the British during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries had reduced the mass of Lambadas further into subalternity, these developments also provided the conditions for the emergence of a small educated strata.

From the late nineteenth century, Hyderabad State had begun to pay more attention to the general welfare of the people, although serious political reforms were still some way off. From the 1880s onwards, many educational institutions were established in the state, and the dominant peasant castes began taking advantage of this opportunity. The total number of schools in the state in 1872–73 was 141 in the districts and fourteen in Hyderabad city. Over the following decades there was a remarkable growth, and by

46 Ibid., 341.

the end of the first decade of the twentieth century there were two colleges, attended by 126 students; twenty-six high schools with 5,918 students totally; and sixty-two middle schools with 10,908 students in all. There were 143 upper primary schools and 778 lower primary schools, with a total strength of 15,039 and 33,074 students, respectively. The number of special schools rose to twenty-five with 7,919 students. Besides this, there were 1,259 private schools with 28,475 students.[47]

This rapid growth in education occurred against a backdrop of what was known in Hyderabad State as the *mulki*–non-*mulki* controversy. The mulkis were local people of the state and the non-mulkis were outsiders men brought in to reform the Hyderabad government. The mulki and non-mulki percentage of civil officers (total 476) in 1886 was 52 and 42 per cent, respectively, and 5 per cent were European officials. A considerable number of non-mulkis were imported into the state from north India, particularly the United Provinces, during the Premiership of Salar Jung I. Until the late nineteenth century, non-mulkis had no access to political power, but later on they became quite influential in the state and began holding political posts as well. The local Muslims as well as the Hindus were not prepared to tolerate this.[48] The growth of education had by the early years of the twentieth century produced increasing numbers of unemployed youth in the state who blamed their failure on the alleged discrimination by the state against mulkis. The educated youth of the dominant peasant castes, particularly the Reddy, Velama and Kapu, formed their own caste associations from the beginning of the twentieth century, and these identified themselves with the mulki agenda.[49] In this way, education opened the doors for a politics of caste identity.

The establishment of Osmania University in 1918 led to an escalation in these conflicts, and also opened doors for communal politics. Both Hindus and non-Mulkis opposed the introduction

47 Raj, *Mediaevalism to Modernism*, 250.

48 Karen Leonard, 'Hyderabad: Mulki–Non-Mulki Conflict', in *People, Princes, and Paramount Power: Society and Politics in the Indian Princely States* ed. Robin Jeffrey (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1978), 74–75.

49 G. Sudharshan Reddy, 'Caste Associations and Social Change in Andhra, 1900–1925' (M. Phil thesis, Osmania University, Hyderabad, 1986).

of Urdu-medium classes in the university as they felt that this was done deliberately to encourage local Muslims to fill administrative posts, in the process denying access to them.[50] A new dimension was added to these conflicts when the Arya Samaj supported the caste-Hindu peasants. The Arya Samaj was established in the state in 1891 and converted itself into a political platform from the beginning of the twentieth century in order to protect the interests of the Hindus.[51] This gradually instigated communal conflict in the state. In response to the Arya Samaj, the Ittehad ul Muslimin (generally called the Razakars) came into being in 1927 to protect the local Muslims' interest. These interlinked conflicting groups and communities had support from across and beyond the state and various groups began entering the state in support of their own religious communities and castes.[52]

These developments had a considerable impact on the Lambadas both socially and politically. As stated in Chapter 5, the Lambadas began settling down as peasants from the middle of the nineteenth century. This exposed them to the wider society, particularly to the caste-Hindu society. This, in turn, resulted in further subalternity, as they were accommodated within the caste-hierarchy in the Census Reports and subjected to caste discrimination, like other subordinate castes.[53] In fact, there was considerable ambiguity among the Census Commissioners over accommodating the Lambadas in the caste-Hindu fold. The colonial census had made 'Hindu' into a default category for any community, unless it was clearly identified with some alternative religious category. From the first census in Hyderabad in 1881 to the 1901 census, the Lambadas (including Banjaras, Lamanis) were enumerated as Hindus. But from the

50 Leonard has argued that this was deliberately done by non-Mulki officials in order to divert the Mulki–non-Mulki politics. See her 'Hyderabad: Mulki-Non-Mulki', 65–106.

51 *The Freedom Struggle in Hyderabad, 1885–1920*, com. Committee of History of the Freedom Movement in Hyderabad, 4 vols. (Hyderabad-Dn.: Government of Hyderabad State, 1957), III; 54–60.

52 Ian Copland, 'Communalism in Princely State: The Case of Hyderabad, 1930-1940', *Modern Asian Studies* 22, no. 4, 1988, 794–94.

53 APSA, NHD, Confidential, Memorandum on the high-handedness of deshmukhs by Ravi Narayana Reddy to D. G. P, No. 635, dated 28 May 1944, File no. 15/AND/54F (1944–45), 65–71.

1911 census, some became classed as 'Animists.' This concept was adopted in the state from the 1891 census as a description for adivasi religious practice. The rule was that anyone who did not claim any religion and only revealed his/her own community name would be classified as Animist. In the 1911 census, 142,044 people stated that they were Lambada alone, and were thus classed as 'Animist,' while 119,239 said that they were both Lambada and Hindu.[54]

From 1921, however, all Lambadas and adivasis were classified as 'Animists' irrespective of their responses. It was probably because of the communal politics of the time, which encouraged state officials to enumerate adivasis under a separate religious category so as to reduce the Hindu population in the state.[55] There was strong opposition to this move by the Arya Samaj. This scheme was dropped finally in the 1941 census by the census commissioner of Hyderabad, but at the same time he declared adivasi tracts as a no-man's-land.[56] By then, the Lambadas were claiming their position within the Hindu fold. We shall discuss this in the succeeding paragraphs.

In fact, different religious groups were vying during the early twentieth century to convert the adivasis to their respective faiths, and this had an adverse effect on adivasis, including Lambadas. The Christian Missionaries, who were mainly operating in some areas of Warangal and Nalgonda districts, began to target the Lambadas.[57] The Arya Samaj was operating across the state, and it campaigned to bring adivasis and 'untouchable castes' who had embraced Christianity and Islam back into the Hindu fold through *suddhi* (purification) ceremonies. This created tensions in the adivasi areas.[58]

The social, economic and political subalternisation of the community drew the educated Lambadas towards the identity

54 *Census of India 1911, Hyderabad*, I: 51.

55 There was a marked increase in the number of the Animists in the state; in 1891, 29,130; in 1901, 65, 315; in 1911, 285, 722; in 1921, 439, 748. See *Census of India 1921, Hyderabad*, I: 86.

56 *Census of India 1941, Vol. XXI, H.E.H. the Nizam's Dominions (Hyderabad State)*, part I, (Hyderabad-Dn.: The Government Central Press, 1945), 278.

57 *Census of India 1931, Hyderabad*, I: 225.

58 Copland, 'Communalism in Princely State', 805.

politics that had already gained considerable momentum in the state. The educated section believed that with greater solidarity, the condition of their community could be improved. Before the last quarter of the nineteenth century it was difficult to find a literate Lambada. To quote writings of the period: 'the whole race is totally illiterate; a Banjara who can read or write is unknown.'[59] This was partly because of their nomadic habits, which did not allow them to access education. But after they settled down as a peasant community, some of them, particularly those who had acquired landed property, began to send their children to local schools.[60] As shown in Table 10, there were 1,529 literate Lambadas at the end of the first decade of the twentieth century. There were more who were literate in the Marathwada than in the Telangana region. This could probably be because of the influence of Bombay Presidency and Mysore State on the region in general; both these regions were ahead when it came to modern education. The Lambada literates were not classified separately after this period, but it appears that the numbers grew considerably.

Table 10: Number of educated Lambadas

	Lambada/Banjara population			Literates		
	Persons	Males	Females	Persons	Males	Females
State	316,083	164,537	151,537	1529	1469	60
Telangana	160,233	85,911	64,322	474	438	36
Marathwada	155,880	78,635	77,215	1055	1031	24

Source: Census of India 1911, Hyderabad, II: 80.

The agenda that was adopted by the newly-educated Lambadas is summed up well in the following memorandum submitted to the Nizam on 25 December 1938:

> We are pure Aryans. For us, Agni (fire) is sacred and it is part of our religious practice. Our auspicious symbol is Swastika. Like other communities, we too have the practice/habit of drawing the swastika symbol before we begin writing. We are like gypsies who do not settle down anywhere. Our misfortune is the cause for that nomadic life.

59 Bilgrami, *Historical and Descriptive Sketch*, 342.

60 Raj, *Medievalism to Modernism*, 250.

> We lost our traditional occupation. None of us own any lands. We work for rich landlords to earn our livelihood. Manual labouring is our main source of livelihood...We are hopeful that you would grant us forest, revenue, and pastoral unused lands for agricultural purposes free of cost. That would also facilitate us to settle down in one place. We strongly believe and are hopeful that you would make provision for educational facilities that is free of cost and scholarships for all the students of our community which is similar to that of Mysore Province. We request you to appoint 'a paid lecturer' by the government, but we should be allowed to choose this person who belongs to our community and he will be able to dedicate time to take care of the welfare needs and affairs of the community. We are delighted to bring to your notice that Mysore Government has already facilitated our community in such a manner. We request you to expunge the label 'criminal tribe' that is attached to our community. We are not civilized yet because we have chosen to live in the forest than in the villages. Therefore we request you to make special provision for the facilities which are already available for Harijans and Others.[61]

The plea has much in common with those made by other subaltern communities in the early twentieth century. What stands out is the way that the deplorable socio-economic and political situation of the community was presented in a strategic manner. The Lambadas' claim to Aryan origin, and thus Hindu status, was one part of this strategy. It can be seen to represent a claim for caste purity, and thus a higher position within the caste hierarchy. As mentioned in Chapter 2, at the beginning of the nineteenth century, the Lambadas were divided into four main clans and each claimed their ancestry from the dominant Rajput clans. At that time, there was little awareness of the benefits of claiming their origins from Hindu mythology.[62] It was only from the last quarter of the nineteenth century that they began to increasingly trace their origins in this way. The first such claim is seen in K. J. L. Mackenzie's notes of 1875 on Banjaras printed in the Census of Hyderabad Assigned Districts 1881.[63] According to him, almost all the Lambadas claimed

61 APSA, NHD, Confidential, Inst. 47, List 10, S. no. 777, File no. 620/1939,. 6.

62 Briggs, 'Account of the Origin', 174.

63 *Census of Hyderabad Assigned Districts 1881*, 152.

Mota and Mola, two herdsmen, as their ancestors.[64] However, Mota and Mola were linked to Hindu mythology. This claim of the Lambadas varied from region to region. For instance, the Lambadas of Hyderabad claimed that Mota and Mola were descendants of Lord Sri Krishna, a cowherd,[65] while those of Madras Presidency claimed that the two were descendants of Vali and Sugriva, the two monkey chiefs mentioned in the Ramayana.[66] The Lambadas of Mysore or Karnataka claimed that they were the descendents of Jambava, who was believed to be the primeval creation of Narayen (the supreme god), from whom the Madigas (an 'untouchable caste'), too, claim their origin.[67] This suggests that the Lambadas' claim to Hindu mythological origins, and also the Kshatriya varna which went with a Rajput status, was a late nineteenth or twentieth century phenomenon. Indeed, as brought out in many recent studies, such claims were merely symbolic. In fact, it was a general colonial feature for the adivasi and nomadic communities to claim Kshatriya status across India. However, these claims were hardly accepted by the dominant castes.

The Lambadas' identity politics grew from what was originally a cultural movement known as the *Banjara Jagarana Andolan* (Banjara Awakening Movement). Some semi-literate elders of the community had initiated this movement in the 1920s. During the 1930s it was taken over by some educated youths, who turned it towards a more strident politics of identity. The initial objective of the movement was to modernise the community, and it was largely rooted in Seva Bhaya's philosophy. It took birth in Mandwi village of Adilabad district and eventually spread to the whole of south India. Baliram Hiraman Patel of Mandvi village, Adilabad, Pulsingh Naik of Gauli Thanda of Wun district in Berar, and Ramsing Pakkirji of Pulummri thanda of Akola district were prominent statewide leaders of the movement.[68]

Baliram Patel appears to have been the founder of the movement in Hyderabad State. He was a self-reformed individual, who played

64 For the full story on the origin of Lambadas, see Appendix I.

65 Hassan, *The Castes and Tribes*, 17.

66 Thurston, *Castes and Tribes*, IV: 208.

67 Iyer, *The Mysore Tribes and Castes*, II: 136.

68 Chinniya Naik, *Banjara Charitra*, 365.

a crucial role in this capacity not only in the state but also in the neighbouring districts of Mysore State, Bombay Presidency and Berar. He practised what he preached. His family came to Mandwi village from Yeotmal taluka at the beginning of the last decade of the nineteenth century. They cleared about 2,000 acres of land in the forest and brought it under cultivation. Subsequently, they registered the land in their name. Baliram studied till the fourth standard and was able to comprehend the larger development process. He was familiar with the colonial agrarian experiments that were being introduced in the Berar region. He was successful in his experiments with commercial crops on his land, especially in using modern technology to cultivate cotton. He also set up a cotton-ginning factory in his thanda to generate employment for the local Lambadas. He was honoured with the patelship of his thanda. He built a huge white *bangla* (house) in the centre of the thanda, a symbol of modernity. He opened a primary school in 1925, which had about sixty to seventy children from the neighbouring thandas as students. Later, in 1937, it was taken over by the Nizam's government. He also started a library and a hospital in the school's vicinity. Baliram bore the hospital expenses, and Ayurvedic medicine that was considered to be an efficacious remedy for malaria—which affected large numbers at that time—was dispensed free of cost. He thus shaped his thanda as a model village. It is said that people from the neighbouring villages came to see the thanda. Among the visitors was Haimendorf, who was measuring developmental trends in adivasi society for his anthropological study.[69] Baliram also wrote a book, *Kshatriyancha Jathavar Itihas* (*History of Kshatriya Jatis*), in which he traces the Lambadas' ancestry to the Rajputs.[70] There is little evidence of his having associated with the larger Gandhian politics, but in his idea of self-reform and in other respects, he appears to have embraced some core Gandhian values.

The principal tenets of the movement were: promoting communal bonds amongst community members across the region; spreading the teachings of Seva Bhaya; claiming a Rajput ancestry; banning animal sacrifices; abstaining from liquor; promoting education, especially of girls; replacing the traditional dress of the women folk

69 Haimendorf, *Tribal Hyderabad*, 197–99

70 Chinniya Naik, *Banjara Charitra*, 358.

with the ordinary sari; campaigning for giving up dacoity; and the teaching of modern agricultural techniques.[71] It was rumoured that Seva Bhaya had been reborn to spell out these tenets.[72] However, the movement mainly revolved around the traditional dress of the women and the banning of animal sacrifices to the goddesses. The Lambada men's clothing was similar to that of any subaltern peasant but the women's dress was completely different from that of the caste-Hindu women, and reflected their position in the life cycle, as well as in society. Teenaged girls wore *langa oni* (half-sari) and ornaments such as bangles and anklets. Married women dressed elaborately and colourfully; their dress consisted of a *phetia* (skirt) of coarse red cotton cloth richly embroidered at the border, and hung from the waist in many folds. This skirt was up to the ankles and exposed the ornaments worn on the leg. The *phetia* was embellished with mirror-work. On the right side of the waist, adjacent to the right thigh, there hung a cord, called *gero*, which was ornamented with cowries and beads, and reached down to the knee. Widows were not allowed to wear this skirt; old women could wear it, but not with rich embroidery and it had to be different from that of the younger women. Along with the skirt they wore a blouse called *kanchli*, which covered their breasts leaving the back exposed. This bodice was richly embroidered, red in colour, and was tied at the back with flat strips attached to both ends; it was completely covered with cowries and small mirrors. *Gungto*, a veil of two-and-a-half yards with embroidery on the border, was worn to cover the exposed parts. The women also wore a great range of ornaments made of gold, silver and copper on their heads, necks, hands, fingers and ankles.[73]

The Andolan activists felt that the Lambada were looked down in society because of their women's dress and that it should be discarded. They also preached that caste Hindus compelled their women to dress thus in order to subordinate and exploit them.[74] Nevertheless, the community strongly opposed the pressure to give up their traditional dress and stop animal sacrifice. It was rumoured

71 APSA, NHD, Confidential, Inst. 47, List 10, S. no. 777, File no. 620/1939, 7.

72 Chinniya Naik, *Banjara Charitra* , 111.

73 Hassan , *The Castes and Tribes*, 15.

74 APSA, NHD, Confidential, Inst. 47, List 10, S. no. 777, File no. 620/1939, 7.

that Merramma was angry with the Lambadas for changing their traditional dress and had killed one woman for discarding her traditional dress and wearing a sari. In fact, those who had changed their traditional dress were subjected to social boycott in many places. The argument was that it was against the Lambada dharma, and it was only the way to distinguish the *Gor* from the *Kwar* (Lambadas from villagers). Baliram tried to convince the Lambadas that it was more important to maintain cleanliness and gain respect in society. Since the women plaited their hair closely and wore heavy copper ornaments, they could not clean their body every day, which could lead to infection and diseases such as cholera and plague. Further, he argued that Seva Bhaya had desired the same.[75] However, the traditionalist groups were unconvinced with his argument and began opposing the reform activities. The story goes that once they left a note at Pulsingh's (one of Baliram's followers) house, saying that if he did not sacrifice two goats to Merramma his two sons would die within a week. Pulsingh did not take the threat seriously, but his wife was scared and arranged for the sacrifice when he was away from home. Somehow Pulsingh got wind of it and rushed back home to stop the sacrifice.[76]

Nevertheless, support for the reformers gradually increased within the community. Initially the grain and cattle markets and the thanda panchayats were the main places where the new ideas and values could be propagated. The weekly fairs were still the main marketplaces for the Lambadas, as their settlements were away from the main villages; and they attended these fairs once a week to purchase their daily provisions and sell their produce. Especially the Digras cotton market in Yeotmal, the Warangal grain market and the Malegaon cattle market were attended by many Lambadas from Hyderabad State, Bombay presidency and Berar. The Andolan activists used these places as their main platforms to spread their new ideas. Sometimes the market grounds were converted into venues for public meetings. First, they would set up a makeshift stage and start singing songs about Seva Bhaya and Merramma and other folk songs, stating the importance of unity and the necessity for change. Once a crowd gathered, they would start giving speeches. The thanda

75 Chinniya Naik, *Banjara Charitra*, 358.

76 Ibid., 347.

panchayat continued to be an important venue for settling civil and criminal issues, and Andolan activists used it to spread their ideas among the community. The panchayat was attended by many naiks of the surrounding thandas. Both client and accused were free to choose their advocates (naiks), who could belong to other thandas, sometimes even another district. As these panchayats were attended by the big naiks of the surrounding thandas, it became a hub where serious debates were held and new ideas floated. Matrimonial relations provided another channel for spreading new ideas across the region. Marriage within the same *gote* (sub-clan) was prohibited, and had to be entered into between clans. Sometimes it was rare to find another clan in the vicinity and matches had to be looked for in other talukas and districts. The marriage celebrations—which often continued for protracted periods—occasionally took Lambadas to far-off villages, allowing the new ideas to be carried considerable distances.[77]

From the 1930s, the movement became more politicised, and the demands were directed towards the state to open special hostels and schools for Lambada children, provide reserved places in the bureaucracy for the educated youth, and make cultivable land available in the forest areas for landless Lambadas.[78] The movement attained momentum partly because of the growing political ferment in the state as well as in British India. Some Lambada leaders in the British territories and Mysore State had participated in the nationalist movement against British rule, and they had access to top Congress leaders. Jathra Naik who mobilised the Lambadas in Mysore State under the banner of the All-Karnataka Banjara Conference emerged as a popular leader in the region and met Mahatma Gandhi at the annual meeting of the Congress at Belgaum in 1926. Later he was elected to the Mysore State Assembly under the reserved quota. A similar trend was also witnessed in the Bombay Presidency, where the Lambadas had been mobilised under the banner of the Banjara Seva Sangh, and had persuaded the government to sanction some special schools and hostels, as well as provide reserved places in the

77 Interview with Ranjit Naik (now deceased) founder member and president of All India Banjara Seva Sangh (1953), printed in *Golden Jubilee Souvenir of AIBSS*, 14.

78 APSA, NHD, Confidential, Inst. 47, List 10, S. no. 777, File no. 620/1939, 5.

administration. A large number of the Lambadas of the Marathwada region of the state were associated with these activities.[79] In fact, there was a continuous flow of ideas between the Lambadas of Hyderabad State and Mysore State, Bombay Presidency and Berar.[80] Restoration of Berar to the Nizam in 1935 not only brought a free flow of Lambadas between the two territories, but it also opened up the Lambadas' world.[81] During the seventy-two years of colonial rule, Berar produced a good number of educated Lambadas, who emerged as undisputed leaders in the post-Independence Maharashtra. This flow of ideas and interaction between the two territories furthered the Lambadas' political movement in the state as the Berar Lambadas became strong supporters of the new identity politics.[82]

Many Banjara/Lambada Youth Associations mushroomed across the state in almost all districts. These put pressure on the authorities to open special schools and hostel for Lambadas.[83] V. P. Naik (son of Pulsing Naik, the Andolan leader) of Yeotmal, Baliram Patel of Adilabad and Kokia Naik and Bhukya Balajidas of Warangal played a crucial role in this mobilisation in Hyderabad State. Young Lambadas who were studying in the social welfare hostels in the district and taluka headquarters towns were inspired by the movement to organise numerous meetings and mobilise the masses in the rural areas, spreading the message of internal reform and the need for unity amongst Lambadas. A particularly significant meeting was held at Raipura Musafer Khana (Warangal town) on 16 June 1938, which was attended by about five thousand Lambadas. The meeting was presided over by Kokia Naik. In his presidential address, he spoke of the ancient culture of the Lambadas and how they were the original natives of India. He further said that society had forced them to live wild and uncivilised lives and take to dacoity, and their women folk were made to wear unbecoming clothes and ornaments. He demanded that the government open

79 *Golden Jubilee Souvenir of AIBSS*, 86–87.

80 Haimendorf, 'Tribal Populations of Hyderabad', XLVIII.

81 Bawa, *The Last Nizam*, 166.

82 Interview with Ranjit Naik in *Golden Jubilee Souvenir of AIBSS*, 15.

83 APSA, NHD, Confidential, Inst. 47, List 10, S. no. 777, File no. 620/1939, 7.

special schools and hostels for the Lambadas and distribute forest land to them.[84]

Under the leadership of Baliram Patel, a statewide meeting was conducted at Gouliguda in Hyderabad city in the same year, and a large number of Lambadas from all the districts of the state attended. This meeting was the first of its kind.[85] From the late 1930s, a federation of Lambadas of south India, particularly from Hyderabad State, Mysore State and Bombay Presidency began to consolidate. To reinforce this effort, a big public meeting was conducted under the All-Karnataka Banjara Conference in 1939 at Gadag town, in the Dharvad district of Bombay Presidency. About ten thousand representatives attended it from Hyderabad State, Mysore State, Bombay Presidency and Berar. Kariyappa Huchanannavaru, Jathra Naik, H. K. Rathod, Baliram Patel, V. P. Naik and B. S. Ram Naik were the main organisers of the meeting, which brought the Lambadas across south India onto one platform for the first time. The meeting's agenda included the following: promote community unity and bring the fragmented Lambadas under a single flag; make the governments open welfare hostels for students; distribute wasteland; and urge the Indian National Congress to extend the anti-arrack movement to the Lambada community.[86] Baliram Patel and his colleagues continued to mobilise the Lambadas on various issues. At the Diras (Yeotmal) Conference of 1953, they announced the establishment of an All-India Banjara Seva Sangh. This acted as a political pressure group. Subsequently, it has held annual conferences and campaigned to inculcate a strong sense of community among the Lambadas/Banjaras across India as a whole.[87]

Interestingly, the Andolan movement and political mobilisation got considerable support from Hyderabad State. When it became clear that their activities were not against the state, the Lambada leaders were given permission to conduct meetings and sometimes

84 Ibid., 8.

85 Ibid., 7.

86 Ibid., 3-6.

87 Interview with R. R. Rathod, founder and youth leader of All India Banjara Seva Sangh (1953), printed in *Golden Jubilee Souvenir of AIBSS*, 50–53.

even given financial support for their work.[88] In response to their constant pleas, the government opened separate Lambada Boarding Schools in Gulbarga and Warangal in 1946, and later on in other districts. The state recognised the Lambadas as a distinct community and provision was made for them to be educated in their own language.[89] A Lambada Teacher Training School was set up at Toorur in Warangal in that year when the Lambadas were engaged in armed struggle for land. As the Lambada language has no script, Deonagari and Telugu scripts were adopted and six textbooks were written in the Lambada language by Lambadas, especially Bhukya Balajidas. The text books were *Banjara Balashiksha*, *Banjara First Reader*, *Banjara Second Reader*, *Banjara Adult Charts*, *Banjara Chitra Path*, and *Radha and Mola*, a Banjara play. Radha and Mola's story is popular among the Lambadas. It narrates the myth related to the origin of the Lambadas. The contents of the other textbooks also related to the Lambadas' lives. This was aimed at attracting the Lambadas to modern education. However, this project was scrapped after Independence.[90]

The Nizam's government made a serious effort to distribute forest land and provide agricultural loans to the Lambadas from 1946. This move of the state was partly to stop the Lambadas from joining the armed struggle, which had gained strength in the Telangana district.[91]

The Lambadas made a serious effort from the early nineteenth century to articulate and rearticulate their spiritual culture and history in the face of a colonial modernity that had transformed their lives in highly adverse ways. The working through of this process had forced them to undergo self-reform. In this, they followed their own unique agenda, adapting their religious beliefs and culture in ways that suited their needs. Their oral tradition provided a powerful resource in this respect. While on the one hand they endeavoured to adopt wider social and religious values in order to gain respectability

88 APSA, NHD, Confidential, Inst. 47, List 10, S. no. 777, File no. 620/1939, 2.

89 *Radha and Mola: A Drama in Banjara Life* (Hyderabad-Dn.: Government Press, 1950), 1–2.

90 *Social Service among the Tribes and Backward Classes in Hyderabad* (1951), 42–45.

91 *Hyderabad Today* II, no.11, 15 July 1950, 5.

for their community among caste Hindus, on the other hand they re-asserted their community bonds and identity. The result was a synthesis that provided a powerful means for them to claim a new role and place in the polity and society that came into being with the Independence of India in 1947.

Conclusion

This book has argued that caste and community were transformed fundamentally under colonial rule. The Lambadas who formed guild-like groups that were involved in the caravan trade in precolonial times became defined as an endogamous caste. Although the colonial anthropological and census classifications delineated them as a 'community of caravanners' or 'Banjaras,' they no longer were necessarily involved in such an occupation, but could be cattle graziers, peasant farmers, agricultural labourers or, indeed, practise any occupation while still retaining their caste identity. Community coherence no longer revolved around a particular occupation. The caste was also seen to occupy a particular niche within the caste hierarchy as a whole. The caste did, however, share for the most part an experience of subalternity, and this created a distinct consciousness among them. In other words, the new political rationality that was imposed by the colonial state established a new order of civilisation, forcing the Lambadas to abandon their traditional occupation. In that process, the Lambadas 'reformed' their own cultural practices incorporating the 'ruling values', which were different from the precolonial ones. However the new articulations were based on the old values. One can call it 'counter-aesthetics of modernity' or 'counterculture of

modernity' or 'double consciousness'.[1] Whatever the definition, it was very much a part of modernity. The redefined culture enabled the Lambadas to reinforce the community itself and relate with the larger caste-Hindu society. These new articulations helped them to face the challenges posed by the colonial establishment. In short, as the process of subalternisation became stronger, the community bonds and consciousness also grew stronger.

In this sense, community identity is not merely a morphological typology of a social group, but also an ideology by which a social group unites and reinforces itself. However, this is not to suggest that the community and its identity were undisputed, for there were many social and economic differences and conflicts between Lambada groups and thandas, which sometimes led to violent conflict. These differences were mediated through a shared past preserved in the stories and songs and a common spiritual order. These provided a unifying force to counter internal dissent. Their common experience of suffering at the hands of unscrupulous moneylenders and landlords, venal customs chowkidars, and police, as well as forest and revenue officials also helped to strengthen their community bonds.

This study is a contribution towards understanding the effects of colonial state power on subaltern communities. In the preceding chapters, we have seen that the British colonial state sought to transform Indian society according to the values and ideas of western Europe. Besides being crucial for the consolidation of a firm base for the colonial state in India, it was also seen to provide the conditions for an eventual handover of power on terms that suited the British. In this, state policy, guided by a strong ideology, was in the forefront. Charles Trevelyan's pamphlet on the education of India spells out this strategy very clearly:

> The existing connection between two such distant countries as England and India, cannot, in the nature of things, be permanent: no effort of policy can prevent the natives from ultimately regaining their independence. But there are two ways of arriving at this point. One of these is through the medium of revolution: the other, through that of reform. In one, the forward movement is sudden and violent: in the other, it is gradual and peaceable...The only means at our disposal for preventing the one and securing the other class of results is, to set the natives on a process of European improvement, to which they are already sufficiently inclined. They will then cease to desire and aim at independence on the old Indian footing... Trained by political institutions, India will remain the proudest monument of British benevolence: and we shall long continue to reap, in the affectionate attachment of the people and in a great commercial intercourse with their splendid country, the fruit of that liberal and enlightened policy which suggested to us this line of conduct.[2]

1 Skaria describes a similar process as 'counter-aesthetic of modernity', and also discusses how similar processes have been termed in academic literature. See his *Hybrid Histories*, 21.

The colonial state thus sought to implant the technologies of Western state power and its particular rationality within its Indian colony. Smithian laissez-faire, Benthamite Utilitarianism, and the 'rule of law' or 'equality before the law', which were considered to provide the most advanced modes of economic organisation, governance and jurisprudence of that time, were imposed on the Indian colony. Existing Indian practices and values were depicted as being irrational, unscientific, uncivilised and inferior to those of the West, being the supposed opposite to the West in many of the most fundamental spheres of life.[3] This supposed inferiority provided a justification for a profound restructuring of the Indian polity, economy and society, so that the British model largely replaced the older Mughal system and practice by the middle of the nineteenth century. A new set of relations of power, property and authority were thus defined and established.[4]

This process of rationalisation of state power began in Hyderabad State from the early decades of the nineteenth century, but it was rigorously implemented only from the middle of that century. The Nizams and their subjects were both stigmatised by the coloniser, but in different ways. While the Nizam's political institutions and court culture were said to be on a par with politics of medieval Europe, being feudal, despotic, violent, arbitrary, and venal, the Lambadas were depicted as barbarian, predatory, criminal, and uncivilised. Both the Nizam and the Lambadas were regulated and

2 Cited in Stokes, *The English Utilitarians*, 46–47.

3 Ibid., 25, 38–39.

4 Ibid., xi–xvi, 5, 25, 37, 69, 249, 284.

governed by the British colonisers within the canon of the modern Western state, as result of which the Nizam and Lambadas were drawn towards what Foucault calls self technologies. Not only the Nizam's officialdom but also his children had to have an English education and familiarise themselves with Western ideas under the strict supervision of the British.

We have seen in the preceding chapters how colonial ideology and forms of governance were established in Hyderabad State. Among other things, the introduction of modern bureaucracy, modern means of transportation, new customs, market regulations, and modern taxation methods, new forms of science and technology, and the creation of new forms of property relations eventually transformed the state into a capitalist society. The creation of a more ordered and standardised society involved considerable amounts of coercion. Despite this, many areas of life in Hyderabad State evaded this process of political rationalisation, in part because many Indian officials—particularly at the lower levels—did not conform to such tenets, and in part because of non-compliance and resistance by the people.

One important finding of this study is that the implementation of the colonial mode of rule in Hyderabad State produced a two-fold system that involved a ruthless exploitation of subaltern communities. The top-level power structure of the state was largely reformist and built on colonial rationality, whereas the local-level power structure deployed the new forms of governance and law only when they operated to their advantage, while acting in coercive and illegal ways when they did not. The lower-level power structure was as Ranajit Guha has described: a system of exploitation and subjection under the *sarkar* (government), sahukar, and zamindar.[5] The Lambadas were then caught in a double bind, for while on the one hand their way of life was stigmatised and marginalised by the Nizam's top officials who had inculcated British values, on the other hand, at the local level, they had to continue to operate within a 'politics of exploitation' when they dealt with the venal local officials, moneylenders and landlords who deployed the new forms of governance and law in highly extortionate and oppressive

5 Guha, *Elementary Aspects*, 8.

ways. Unable to extricate themselves, their predicament was dire indeed.

The establishment of colonial rule caused grave disruptions to the Lambada's way of life from early on in the nineteenth century. The establishment of 'free' and 'regulated trade', which might ostensibly have benefited them, was implemented in ways that discriminated against both non-British territories and non-dominant trading groups. Local officials could deploy the new rules so as to ratchet up their extortions from relatively powerless traders, such as the itinerant Lambadas. The new state monopoly over the salt trade was also detrimental to the Lambada caravan traders. On top of this, the development of the railways and an improved road system in the second half of the nineteenth century provided another heavy blow. All of this led in time to the Lambadas being forced to give up their grain dealing and caravan trades.

As we have seen in chapter 2, the Lambadas' efforts to turn to cattle raising and trading from the middle of the nineteenth century were also badly hampered by the colonial establishment. New notions of cattle wealth that were based on narrowly commercial principles and the so-called scientific breeding practices deployed by the colonial state stigmatised and marked the Lambadas' cattle as nomadic and worthless for cultivation purposes. Additionally, the regulation of cattle markets, the notion of cattle trespass, and the enclosing of common grazing lands and forest lands that were introduced by the colonial state often pushed the cattle-raising Lambadas into the hands of grasping local officials. The criminal stigma attached to their community was detrimental to earning an honest livelihood and made them an easy target for such officials. Their harassment hampered the Lambadas' cattle raising practice in various ways. Many stopped attending the cattle fairs and gave up trying to graze their livestock on forest lands. Again, they were unable in many cases to earn a viable livelihood from this alternative occupation.

Similarly, although the law no doubt sanctioned the action taken by the state against Lambadas who took to dacoity, the methods and practices employed by the police and local officials often went well beyond it. The colonial state's notion of dacoity as a hereditary occupation, and its methods of the so-called 'scientific' policing

of such dacoits, led to the stigmatisation of the entire community as 'criminals', although few of them were actually involved. This provided an opening for many local officials and landlords to further harass and exploit the Lambadas. We have seen in chapter 4 the vile ways in which the CTA was implemented. Village headmen and dominant peasants frequently induced the Lambadas—who were often employed by them as agricultural labourers—to commit dacoity, keeping a big share of the stolen property for themselves. Since the community as a whole was stigmatised, everybody viewed them with suspicion and they hardly received any support from the general society, even when they wanted to settle as agriculturists. Overall, the way dacoits were treated at the local level pushed many Lambadas into further crime.

As was seen in chapter 4, the Lambadas' experience with agriculture was an unhappy one. The British introduced the 'rule of property' in land, which, in turn, produced varied agrarian relations in colonial India. Although the land acts and regulations encouraged peasants to bring waste and forest land under cultivation, in practice this process involved heavy exploitation of the subaltern peasants. It was not possible for a subaltern peasant to occupy any waste or forest land without offering some mamul to the revenue and forest officials. Importantly, the principle of 'rule of property' provided the ideal security for debt, which led to the land cultivated by the subaltern groups becoming a security that was foreclosed on whenever there was an agrarian crisis, such as a period of drought, famine or price collapse. The new notion of land rights thus created the conditions for the eventual eviction of many Lambadas from their land through the after-effects of moneylending and by force. The beneficiaries were the rural rich, many of whom were not cultivators. This led in time to a revolt against land eviction and exploitation by the dominant rural classes, which reversed the process to some extent.

Nevertheless, the Lambadas sought quite soon to try to reconcile themselves to the new forms of rationality and governance, but on their own terms. Their spiritual culture played a crucial role in this respect. As shown in chapter 6, from the early decades of the nineteenth century, serious efforts were made within the Lambada community to realign values in ways that would help them to relate to and accommodate the colonial establishment more effectively.

This they did through a movement for religious reform led by Seva Bhaya that encouraged sobriety, cleanliness and a wholesome way of life. On the whole, the colonial state encouraged such movements amongst subaltern communities, so long as they did not turn against the government or the local dominant classes.[6] This was followed in the early twentieth century by a movement to 'uplift' the community through education, as well as to forge a more positive identity for the community and to gain more favourable treatment for its members from the state. The Lambadas' transformation from a 'nomadic', 'predatory', 'criminal' and marginalised group to settled peasant subjects who were both fit and able to play a role within the new politics of representation should be viewed in this context.

Dirks has argued that caste in its modern form was a product above all of a practice of colonial governance that not only created a systematic body of knowledge of the caste system and its presumed rationale but also determined the way that caste became a major political force in modern India.[7] Caste and community, he holds, became an all-embracing concept deployed by the colonial rulers to encompass and explain the phenomena of India's huge social and organisational diversity.[8] In this book, I have opposed this view and suggest that idioms of community and caste that developed in the colonial period were rooted above all in the shared traditions, spiritual culture and everyday experience of particular groups, both under precolonial and colonial rule. The Lambada community was forged initially from various subaltern communities of India during the caravan days. At that time, caste boundaries were relatively fluid. It is likely that such assimilation continued on a reduced scale until the late nineteenth century.[9] In the process, the Lambadas had developed their own language, spirituality, civil code, and style of dress that distinguished them as a separate community. At that time they were one of the most scattered communities, with obscure genealogical threads and no territorial specificity. When, towards the end of the eighteenth century, Lieutenant-Colonel Mark Wilks asked a Lambada group attached to Cornwallis's army about their

6 Hardiman, *The Coming of the Devi*, 177–88; Susan Bayly, *Caste, Society*, 80

7 Dirks, *Castes of Mind*, 14–16, 255–57.

8 Ibid., 5.

9 Thurston, *Castes and Tribes*, IV: 226.

homeland, one of them replied that 'that is our country, pointing to a tent which covered his grain bags, and wherever it is pitched is our home, my ancestors never told me of any other.'[10] They were, nonetheless, perceived even then as a community.

The colonial state created an environment in which communities were driven to organise and define themselves in new ways. In the case of the Lambadas, they drew strongly on their spiritual culture and oral tradition to redefine and refashion themselves so as to meet the challenge created by their need to now earn a livelihood as a largely settled peasantry. As shown in chapter 5 and the Appendix, the Lambadas articulated a number of myths, stories and songs dealing with their past and their spiritual culture that shaped their history and identity as part of the broader culture. This enabled them to adapt to the new realities while retaining their own integrity. Seva Bhaya's movement was crucial in the articulation of this new identity, as it replaced many of their older spiritual values with new ones. However, without the old as a starting point, the new would hardly have gained acceptance. Seva Bhaya's movement also provided a matrix for the educated Lambadas who mobilised and drove the community towards a new identity politics in the early twentieth century. Although in some respects the new values drew on Brahmanical models of purity, in that vegetarianism, sobriety, cleanliness and so on were a core part of the programme for self-reform, the assertion of such values represented also a challenge to the Brahmanical caste hierarchy, which could hardly accommodate lower caste groups as equals. This reform movement, in other words, not only provided a challenge to the existing hierarchy, but also, in its later more political form, demanded a rightful share in state power for the Lambadas. Finally, during the last years of the Nizam's rule, they were able to form a federation of Lambadas that stretched across the whole of south India. They were now in a position to become significant actors within the democratic politics of postcolonial India.

Above all, therefore, it was their experience under colonial rule that united the Lambadas as a modern caste, with a new form of caste solidarity. The agency for such a transformation had primarily come from within the community itself.

10 Wilks, *Historical Sketches of the South*, 518.

There is a problem with Dirks's argument that colonial categories produced a new reality. This was sometimes not the case at all, as can be seen from the history of the attempt to categorise castes within a four-fold varna system in Hyderabad State. As in British India, Hyderabad attempted to slot innumerable social groups within manageable categories from the 1881 census onwards. Each caste was accordingly classed as belonging to a particular varna. This proved a frustrating task for officials, as the varna category hardly existed in the region. There were about 240 castes/communities in the state, which were independent and self-acting social groups engaged in trading, manufacturing and cultivation. Except for the Brahman and the Rajput there were few other castes which fell into any of the first three categories of varna.[11] The varna model of enumeration was found inflexible in practice and denounced from the 1891 census in British India, and the same view was extended to the state. The castes were then classified into twenty-two groups, including the first three varna categories, based on the traditional occupation. This categorisation failed to have any lasting influence.

There were, nevertheless, areas in which such categorisation could create new social and political realities. This was seen most particularly with the categorisation of religious affiliations. By slotting each caste/community into an unambiguous religious category, the census gave rise to a politics of its own. In the case of the Lambadas, they were initially classed as 'Hindu,' then partly 'Hindu' and partly 'Animist,' then in 1921 'Animist' alone. This had nothing to do with any actual shift in religious culture amongst the Lambadas, being determined entirely by a wider power politics within the state, as local groups that identified themselves as Hindu sought to challenge the perceived hegemony of Muslims within the Nizam's state. In the 1930s, this political tussle led to the Lambadas being categorised as 'aboriginals,' and later as a 'Scheduled Tribe.' Today, many accordingly identify themselves as 'tribals' or 'adivasis.' In these ways, the colonial governmental project ruptured the fluid boundaries between religious identities that had existed in the precolonial period and tagged each caste/community within a

11 *Census of India 1911, Hyderabad*, I: 135.

discrete and particular religious category.[12] This in turn fed into a politics of identity that could go beyond religion alone. I do not, therefore, entirely disregard Dirks's argument on colonial agency, for community identity is a two-way process, and it may be delineated from state initiatives. On balance, however, my argument is that the experience of the community was crucial, and that identity was above all self-created.

This book has been written from the perspective of postcolonial India, and it will be illuminating now to move on to a postscript and say a few words about what has happened to the Lambadas in postcolonial India. The rule of the Nizam ended in September 1948, and Hyderabad State merged with the Indian Union. However, the state remained the same territorially, until its parts, Telangana, Marathwada and Karnataka, were merged respectively into the linguistic states of Andhra Pradesh, Maharashtra and Mysore (later renamed Karnataka) in 1956. The Indian government's greatest contribution to the subaltern communities has been positive discrimination or reservation in legislative bodies, government bureaucracy and education. The Lambadas of Telangana and Marathwada had been classified as De-notified Tribes, while the Lambadas of the Kannada-speaking region were considered to be a Scheduled Caste. In Andhra Pradesh, which was formed by merging the Telugu-speaking region of Madras Presidency and the Telangana region of Hyderabad State, a peculiar situation arose for the Lambadas. The Lambadas of Telangana were categorised as a De-notified Tribe and the Lambadas of Andhra region as a Scheduled Tribe. The former enjoyed fewer privileges. There was a long-drawn-out movement by the Lambadas of Telangana for them to be categorised as a Scheduled Tribe on a par with the Andhra Lambadas, which achieved its goal in 1976.[13]

Although the state was divided into three parts and portions of it had merged with the respective linguistic state, the Lambadas

12 *Census of India 1901, Vol. XXII, Hyderabad State* (Hyderabad-Dn.: Venoogopaul Pillai & Sons Printers to H.H. the Nizam's Government, 1903), part I, 216–217.

13 *Census of India 1961, Vol.1, Monograph Series Part V-B (iv), Lambadi (A Scheduled Tribe of Andhra Pradesh)* (New Delhi: The Registrar General, India, Ministry of Home Affairs), Foreword, 1–2.

of south India rallied under the flag of the All-India Banjara Seva Sangh, which was formed in 1953. This body made representations to the central and various state governments to undertake welfare measures for the advancement of their community, such as land distribution, agricultural loans, house construction, and the opening of separate schools and hostels for their children. The Lambadas mostly settled as agriculturists or agricultural labourers. The Lambadas of the Marathwada and Karnataka regions proved to be successful to some extent in agriculture as well as in education and politics. This is in part because the Lambadas of these regions had settled largely in plains areas in which the land was fertile. Helped by the flourishing of a strong *dalit* (depressed castes) politics in these states, the Lambadas emerged as a politically influential community. Particularly in Maharashtra, their community leaders have served as Chief Ministers twice in the last fifty years. Taking advantage of this, many Lambadas established themselves as industrialists and businessmen after obtaining government loans. Also, the Lambada leaders established a large number of educational institutions across the region for their community. This has hastened their pace of change. Despite this, considerable economic disparity is still found within the community in these regions.[14]

The situation of the Lambadas in Telangana is quite different. They have succeeded neither in agriculture nor in politics, except to some extent in getting a little education and some government employment. Their thandas have not been provided even with the most basic facilities such as schools, electricity, health care, roads or transport. Generally, their thandas are away from the main village sites, often at a distance of two to five kilometres, and sometimes even about ten kilometres away, in forest areas. All the government schemes that are sanctioned for the village panchayats have been confined to the main village and never reach these thandas. The voting power of the Lambadas is often obstructed by the dominant peasant castes of the villages. The village president is elected for five years and under the rules a Lambada has from time to time to occupy the post on rotating basis. But when the Lambadas' turn

14 V. P. Naik and Sudhakar Rao Naik belonging to the Lambada community became Chief Ministers of Maharashtra. See *Golden Jubilee Souvenir of AIBSS*, 84–91.

comes, the influential figures of the dominant peasant castes of the village put up a Lambada *jeetagadu* (bonded labourer) as the candidate. If this jeetagadu wins the fight, his master enjoys all the power. Being still a bonded labourer, he has no option but to put his thumb impression on any document that his master puts before him. Such manipulations of power are common in the region. If not the jeetagadu, the dominant peasant castes pick up some inactive Lambada, whom they can use as their puppet, when it is the turn for a Lambada president. The same is the case in the taluka and district boards and legislative elections. One important reason is that the electorate is general, that is, all people vote for, not just the Lambadas. Hence general exigencies always predominate over the specific demands of the Lambadas.

Life continues to be very hard in rural Telangana, and if anything it is getting harder. The recent liberalisation and globalisation of the economy has hit Lambadas hard. Fast-paced technological growth in agriculture combined with drought from the middle of the 1980s also reduced the need for agricultural labour in rural Telangana. Above all, the dominant peasant castes continue to indulge in heavy exploitation of labour and oppressive caste practices. This has forced the Lambadas to migrate to urban centres such as Hyderabad, Vijayawada, Mumbai and Pune as construction labourers. But in the cities too they encounter ruthless exploitation by contractors and builders. Above all, as migrants they neither have any constitutional guarantees, including franchise rights, nor basic facilities such as health, drinking water or schools for children. The contractors and builders offer some amount as advance to Lambadas, who use the money to clear their debts back home. Once a Lambada falls into this trap he never comes out of it, and becomes perpetually dependent on the contractors and builder. The contractors and builder do not allow the Lambadas to visit their thanda, even in the case of a death in the family. They are made to stay at the construction places without any proper shelter. On the whole, there is abysmal poverty in the Lambada thandas of Telangana.[15]

Alongside this, a politics of identity still flourishes, and it has if anything been reinvigorated since 1990. The implementation of the

15 Gita Ramaswamy and Bhukya Bhangya, *The Lambadas: A Community Besieged* (Hyderabad: United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund, 2002).

Mandal Commission recommendations in 1990, which aimed to provide reservation to Other Backward Castes, divided India for the first time into two social blocks, with anti and pro-Mandal agitations mushrooming across the country. These agitations provided a stage for a new form of caste-based mobilisation in Andhra Pradesh. Encouraged by this revival of caste identity politics, some educated young Lambadas formed an association called the *Lambada Nangara Bheri*, which was named strategically after the traditional musical instrument of the community. The slogan and aim of the association is *'appan thandema appan raj'* (our rule in our thanda). The slogan is catchy and succeeded in mobilising many Lambadas against the government's indifferent attitude. The Lambada youth who took the pro-Mandal position and fought in the agitation gradually became a solid force that could make its voice heard. Tejawath Bellaiah Naik and Vadtiya Dasuram Naik, both trained in radical Marxist politics, emerged as the undisputed leaders of the Lambada youth from this agitation. At the same time, there was a serious debate among the Naxalite groups in the state about the caste question. Among them, the Veeranna group took a strong position on the caste question and came out with a new theory of class-caste. According to this theory, each subaltern caste and community was justified in forming its own community association so as to uphold its identity on the matrix of its past culture. On this basis, a federation could be formed with other suppressed castes and communities in order to capture power through democratic politics. To conduct this line of struggle, the Veeranna group encouraged subaltern castes and communities to form caste and community-based associations and provided them with a theoretical framework and financial support, including the Lambada Nangara Bheri. This strategy seemed to have worked well and there was a great momentum in caste-based mobilisation in the state in the mid-1990s.

The Madiga sub-community of the Scheduled Castes also started Madiga Dandora, a movement aimed at energising the Madiga community, which was active in village life, but backward in education and employment. The Madiga Dandora insisted on sub-categorisation of the SC community, as the lion's share of affirmative action was going to another SC community, the Malas, who had benefited from missionary activity. Through its success

and longevity, the Dandora has provided an inspiration for other caste-based movements in the state.

The Nangara Bheri leaders have mobilised the Lambadas, putting the community's everyday problems in the forefront. One of their major demands is for separate village panchayats for the Lambada thandas. The Nangara Bheri leaders have made it a point to rearticulate their community's identity in the process. Unlike most existing leaders, who have been members of the mainstream political parties and have remained puppets in the hands of the dominant castes, the new leaders have taken a radical stand. They draw their strength from the goddess Merramma, who symbolises the Lambadas' militant culture of the caravan days. Green, the colour that is traditionally associated with Merramma, was chosen for the association's flag. The cadre also wear a green-coloured scarf on their shoulders. The Nangara Bheri activists have discarded, in contrast to most previous leaders of the community, the Lambadas' claim to Rajput ancestry, and they locate the Lambadas as a subaltern community. The leaders of this movement see the militant tradition of the community, which is symbolised in Merramma, as offering the maximum potential to mobilise the Lambadas into a modern political force that can invert existing power relations. They also believe that this strategy not only creates self-confidence and self-respect, but also allows the community to assert its culture, which has been severely stigmatised and denigrated by the state and the dominant castes.

Nangara Bheri has been carrying out active propaganda amongst the Lambadas. Its leader has toured the Lambada thandas barefoot and on a bicycle. A number of meetings have been conducted in the taluka and district towns, as well as in Hyderabad city. The campaign has been received well by many Lambadas, leading to a new awakening within the community. The people have been inspired both by Bellaiah Naik and Dasuram Naik's stirring speeches, and the playing of the nangara and singing of traditional-style folk songs that stress the importance of unity and need for mobilisation of the community. The community leaders generally address the village and taluka-level meetings, but when district or statewide meetings are organised, speakers are invited from allied castes in order to introduce them to the movement and forge a wider solidarity.

At the time of the general election of 1999, the castes and communities that had been mobilising themselves under the aegis of the Veeranna group formed an alternative political party called the Mahajan Front Party. In this way, subaltern castes and communities in Andhra Pradesh have been building a solid base for a subaltern politics based on a caste/community identity.[16]

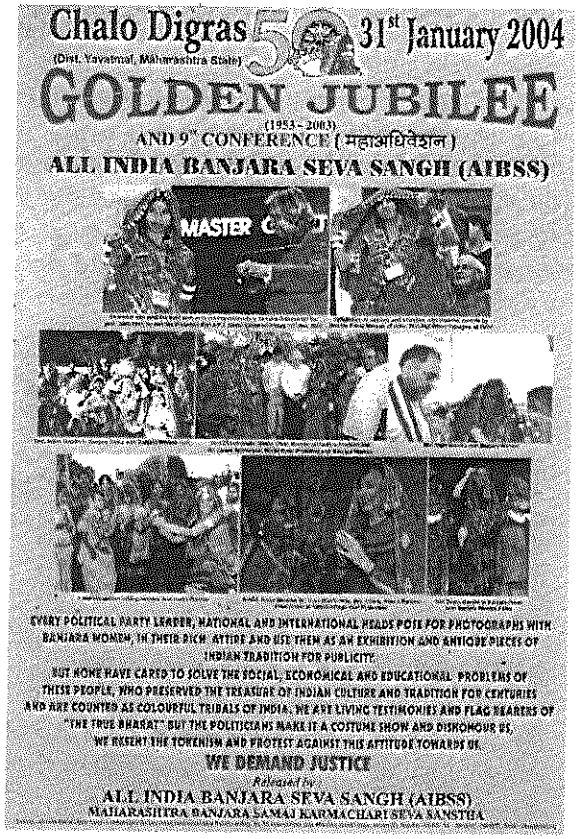

Chalo Digras
(Dist. Yavatmal, Maharashtra State)
31st January 2004
GOLDEN JUBILEE
(1953 - 2003)
AND 9th CONFERENCE (महाअधिवेशन)
ALL INDIA BANJARA SEVA SANGH (AIBSS)
EVERY POLITICAL PARTY LEADER, NATIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL HEADS POSE FOR PHOTOGRAPHS WITH BANJARA WOMEN, IN THEIR RICH ATTIRE AND USE THEM AS AN EXHIBITION AND ANTIQUE PIECES OF INDIAN TRADITION FOR PUBLICITY.
BUT NONE HAVE CARED TO SOLVE THE SOCIAL, ECONOMICAL AND EDUCATIONAL PROBLEMS OF THESE PEOPLE, WHO PRESERVED THE TREASURE OF INDIAN CULTURE AND TRADITION FOR CENTURIES AND ARE COUNTED AS COLOURFUL TRIBALS OF INDIA. WE ARE LIVING TESTIMONIES AND FLAG BEARERS OF "THE TRUE BHARAT" BUT THE POLITICIANS MAKE IT A COSTUME SHOW AND DISHONOUR US.
WE RESENT THE TOKENISM AND PROTEST AGAINST THIS ATTITUDE TOWARDS US.
WE DEMAND JUSTICE
Released by
ALL INDIA BANJARA SEVA SANGH (AIBSS)
MAHARASHTRA BANJARA SAMAJ KARMACHARI SEVA SANSTHA

ILLUSTRATION 7: Lambada activists express here a critical view of the way that modern political leaders relate to the Lambadas. The focus of attention of these outsiders is on the Lambada women, with their colourful 'traditional' dress, who are thus seen to embody the spirit of the community. From *Golden Jubilee Souvenir of AIBSS*, cover page.

16 Interview with Tejawath Bellaiah Naik, state president of Nangara Bheri, in Hyderabad on 20 March 2005.

The state in postcolonial India is largely insensitive to the suffering caused to the poor by the processes of liberalisation and globalisation. Mainstream political leaders see this as a necessary price of development. As impoverished subaltern groups migrate to urban centres in search of a livelihood, their community bonds are loosened, and they lose various rights, including their voting rights, that have been forged through years of struggle within their home regions. It is yet to be seen how this massive displacement will affect the politics of identity, and the impact that it will have on democracy in India in general. The likelihood is that if the state continues to remain indifferent to the distress of the subaltern classes their most effective strategy will be to forge new caste-related alliances on an all-India basis, in which caste/community identities coalesce to form solidarities that are defined in terms of much broader categories, such as the *dalit*, or the 'backward' or subaltern castes and communities. In this way, a new and more inclusive politics of subalternity may in time emerge.

Appendix

Mythological story about the origin of the Lambada community (Interview with Laliya Dhadi of Neradavai in Nalgonda district on 2 November 2004. These are long stories narrated with dramatic expressions by traditional story tellers, *dhadis;* I have given just synopses while preserving their essence.)

The Lambada community is broadly divided into five exogamous clans (with numerous sub-groups): Rothod, Powar/Pamar, Chowhan, Vadtiya and Thamburi/ Dhadi. Each clan has a romantic story to narrate about its mythical origin. According to the stories, they claim their origin from Mota and Mola who were said to be descendents of Lord Krishna. As the story goes, one day, Lord Krishna thinks of leaving this universe and calls his servants to see him in his chamber. When the servants assemble before their master for the last time, Krishna tells them that he has decided to depart and distribute his *gopikas* (female devotees) among them, leaving them in their care. He also tells them that they can have sexual relations with the gopikas. At that time, a servant by name Mola is absent, as he has been sent on work. When he returns, he comes to know of what has transpired and is upset that no gopika has been kept for him. He reproaches Krishna for this. Lord Krishna consoles him by saying that he has kept aside Radha, his most precious gopika, for Mola. But Krishna tells Mola that because Radha is sacred and his (Krishna's) beloved gopika, Mola

should not have a sexual relationship with her, and should take great care of her. Mola gladly accepts Radha with this condition. From then onwards, Mola and Radha start living as partners without any physical relations.

Mola was an expert in acrobatics, and earned a livelihood through performing. After a while, the couple are saddened by their lack of progeny, who will continue their tradition after their deaths. They then agree to adopt three higher caste boys. With this aim in mind, they perform acrobatics in the presence of the Raja of Rathodghad. The Raja is so pleased with their performance that he asks them to name anything from his palace with the promise that he would present it to them. Mola and Radha unhesitatingly ask the Raja for his son; the king is forced to give up his son. Since the boy is from Rathodghad, he is named Rathod. Likewise they charm the Rajas of Chawghad and Powarghad with their acrobatic feats and take a son from each for adoption, the boys being named Chowhan and Powar/Pamar after the forts. When they grow up, they marry a poor Brahman's daughters, who are abandoned by their father in a forest, as he had not found them suitable grooms. Later their family evolves into the Lambada *samaj* (society), which is divided into a number of *gotes* (sub-groups): Rathod has twenty-seven gotes, Powar twelve, and Chowhan six.

A similar story is also chanted about the origin of the Dhadi clan. According to this story, after some time Radha and Mola visit the Raja of Macharghad, whose kingdom is plagued by mosquitoes. The problem is so severe that none come to attend their performance. Then one of their adopted sons, Bhavaiah, using *mantras* (magic) locks up the mosquitoes in one room, telling the Raja that he will take back his mantras after the performance. But the Raja wants to get rid of the mosquitoes permanently and so takes the boy inside the palace and kills him by giving him poisoned milk. After the performance, the parents cannot find their son. They suspect the Raja and ask him to return their son. The king finally relents and admits that his soldiers have killed their son, and offers to give his son in Bhavaiah's place. Mola and Radha accept the offer and name the boy Gavaiah. His clan grows up as the Dhadi with six sub-groups.

Likewise, the Vadtiya clan has an interesting story. Once, the Lambadas are visited by a famine, and they borrow money from Dhema Guru (a saint) to tide over the distress. But they cannot repay the debt. The Guru sends a Brahman to the Lambadas to collect the debts. The Brahman eventually impregnates a Lambada girl. The Lambadas bring this matter to the Guru's notice and demand compensation. The Guru agrees to annul all their debts. After some time, the girl gives birth to a male child. The four clans then hold a meeting and decide to bury the boy. But while they are digging his grave, a swarm of ants comes out, and that makes them rethink about the fate of the boy. Assuming that the boy's family would grow like a swarm of ants, the naiks revoke the earlier decision and allow the boy to live. They name him Vadtiya, as he was to be buried

TABLE 11: *Gotes* (sub-groups) of Lambadas

Main clan	Gotes (sub-group)
1. Rathod	a) Bhukya (original Rathods): 1. Ramavat, 2. Khetavat, 3. Rajavat, 4. Khodavat, 5. Kumbhavat, 6. Kharamtod, 7. Dhegavat, 8. Nenavat, 9. Khimavat, 10. Meghavat, 11. Dungavat, 12. Pitavat, 13. Merajot, 14. Khatravat, 15. Sudharat, 16. Ratla, 17. Madrecha, 18. Ramanya, 19. Vedyot, 20. Jalapot, 21. Darvan, 22. Phadan, 23. Meplat, 24. Dalpan, 25. Jatoth, 26. Kharnavat, 27. Gidavat. b) Bhanooth (born from Balija caste): 1. Khanavat, 2. Khandavat, 3. Kharnavat, 4. Khojavat, 5. Dhanavat, 6. Panavat, 7. Rupavat, 8. Subthavat, 9. Adot, 10. Lavari, 11. Dhiravat, 12. Kuntavat, 13. Munavat.
2. Powar/Pamar	1. Jarpala, 2. Islavat, 3. Amgot, 4. Indravat, 5. Wankhodot, 6. Lunsavat, 7. Lokavath, 8. Goramo, 9. Alvat, 10. Chaivat, 11. Bani, 12. Taranal.
3. Chowhan	1. Mood, 2. Sabhavat, 3. Kheloot, 4. Khorra, 5. Platya, 6. Lavadya
4. Vadtiya	1. Badavat, 2. Boda, 3. Gugalot, 4. Dharavat, 5. Ajmera, 6. Tezavat, 7. Meravat, 8. Malot, 9. Lakavat, 10. Lunnavat, 11. Barmavat, 12. Halavat, 13. Kunsavat.
5. Thambur/ Dhadi	1. Ratnavat, 2. Bhat, 3. Seravat, 4. Bajijut, 5. Dhavat, 6. Rudhavat.

under a *vaderjad* (banyan tree). Later his clan develops with thirteen gotes. One more gote is added when a Vadtiya (Barmavath gote) old woman is going to visit a Guru and finds a boy on the way. The boy is named Ajmera as he is found in an *ajmera vadi*, (cumin garden) and is admitted into their clan.

A similar sort of story exists regarding the origin of the Bhanooth clan, a sub-clan of the Rathods, a clan which is more prevalent in the south. The story goes thus: The Rathods buy a boy (Bhanooth) for thirteen rupees from a Guru. It is said that the boy was presented to the Guru by a Balija caste woman (a peasant caste in the Nizam's state). The boy plays mischief against the Rathods when they are fighting with the Vadtiyas, and the thanda panchayat expels him from their clan. The boy then breaks away from the Rathods and forms his own clan with thirteen gotes in his name, Bhanooth, gathering many from the various lower castes.

A POPULAR VERSE AMONG THE LAMBADA COMMUNITY

Panch Panchat raja Bhojer sabha
Pachare lakh, anpachare savvalakh
Sag-Savayi Parakan kide, kide doyi bat
Upar kanta paramal mare
Mayi beto dudalor nayak
Doyi ghoder kan barobarar nayak|
Ang khade khanan, lar khade khopara
Doyim raj mitor nayak . . .
Von toon madoyi khan rajeer nayak.

(This assembly is like the assembly of King Raja Bhoj
Which exceeds a lakh of people
The settlement of engagement is arrived at.
After thorough examination and discussion
There is fruit in the centre of thorns.
O! Chief, the ears of two horses are of equal size.
We enjoyed the sweet dish in the past; in the future too
We would enjoy the same sweetness.
We are two relatives.
One is a wooden ladder; another is a leather ladder.
The wooden ladder will break into pieces,

But the leather ladder remains forever.
O! Chief, rain drops fall down from the sky.
There are flora and fauna everywhere; both are satisfied by eating sweets.)

These lines, which are chanted on the occasion of marriages in the community, have been produced and reproduced in the Lambadas' oral literature probably from their caravan days. The reference to Raja Bhoj suggests that the verse is ancient, as he is a figure commonly associated with the long-standing oral traditions in India. He is a semi-mythical person around whom many tales and sentiments are woven in such traditions.

Glossary

Adivasi	*original inhabitant of India*
agrahar	village granted to Hindu priest
amildar	subordinate military officer
amin	police inspector
anna	sixteenth part of rupee
asami shikmi	tenant-at-will
badmash	burglar particularly in city/town
bajara/ragi	millet
bancharai	grazing tax
bangla	house
baniya	traditional trader and moneylender
banjar	wasteland
bara-rog	rinderpest (a disease in cattle)
beedi	small cigar
bhagat	devotee/medicine-man
bhagela/jeethagadu	a kind of bonded labour
bhakti	devotion
bhegar	forced labour
bhog	offering made of sweet rice and ghee to the fire
bhung	an intoxicating drug
biga	measure of land equal to about one-third of an acre

biranjar	rice carrier
byname	selling in all legal solemnity
char	wandering
cheppal	footwear
chout	tax
chowki	customs outpost
chowkidar	customs officer
coss	mile
dakait	dacoit or bandit
dakani	woman sorcerer
dalam	armed squad
dalit	depressed caste/class
daru	country liquor
deshmukh/deshpandya	traditional revenue collector at village level/ also landlord
devi	goddess
dhakala	proof of receipt
dhartoora	a poisoner, a dacoit who poisoned people and looted property
diwani	government land
donga	thief
eksal patta	tenancy for one year
gadi	fort-like house/ seat of power
galla-ghont	haemorrhagic septicaemia
garce	a salt measure equal to 120 Indian maund
geeth	song
gilti	anthrax
giras	tax collected by forest chiefs from plains
godown	storehouse
gohur/gormaati	cattle herdsman/Lambada
gor-bhai	Lambada brothers
got	oral account
gote	sub-group or sub-clan
gundas	strongmen/private army
gunta-chutta	a kind of cigar
hak/gira	share collected by adivasi chief

hatadiya	bullock
huqdari	propertied
ijara	letting land on lease
ijaradar/banjardar	landlord who owns land under ijara system
inam	land grant for religious institution
jagir	originally a plot of land from which government official/religious institution/ local ruler collected land tax, which became a landed estate during the colonial period
jagirdar	holder of jagir/landlord
jamadar	police head-constable
jangad	outcaste absorbed into the Lambada community
jangal	forest
jangli	wild people
jati	caste/tribe
jawan	police constable
jawar	yellow millet
kachari	court
karbhari	secretary
karkhana	factory
karwani	caravan
khadi	a kind of coarse cotton cloth
kharif	season from June to November
khillat	a gift of turban cloth
kotwal	village policeman
kowldar	tenant
kowldari/kowl	tenancy
kulavamsavaly	family history
kunta	fortieth part of an acre
kwar	non-Lambada
lakh	one hundred thousand
langa-oni	half-sari
laoni	a kind of tenancy
lati	wooden staff
lavanch	salt

makka	maize
maktadar	revenue collector of village granted for religious purpose/ also landlords
mali patel	village officer
mamul	bribe
Marwadi	trader/usurer originally from Rajasthan
masand	Lambada follower of Sikh guru
mata	mother
mook-khor	foot and mouth
muchalka	paper bond
muhtamim	superintendent of police
mulki	local
myhima	power/magic
naga	snake
naib	a deputy (agent)
najarana	gift
naka	customs house
nakadar	customs officer
nalla	stream
nangara	traditional musical instrument of Lambadas
nayak/naik	Lambada chief
paigah	land granted to nobles
pakka	proper
panchayats	jury
patel	village head
patta	land right with registered document
pattadar/pattadari	occupant (holder of registered document)
patwari	village accountant
police patel	village officer (in-charge of police duties)
pot-pattadari	joint-occupant
pullah	a grain measure equal to one hundred and twenty kilos
rabi	season from December to March
rahdarri	toll duty
raja/nawab	prince/king
rak	ash

razakar	Muslim fundamentalist/activist
regar	black soil
rumnah	grazing pasture
ryot	peasant
sadr-mohtamim	divisional police officer
sadr-ul-maham	minister for police
sahukar	traditional moneylender/merchant
saki	story
samasthan	estates of traditional raja (local ruler)
samasthandar	holder of samasthan
sanad	government order
sangham	village committees
sarbastadar/guttidar	land revenue contractor
sarf-i-khas	crown land or Nizam's private estate
sarkar	government
Sathi Bhavani	seven goddesses
sawar	police constable
seer	a grain measure equalling to one kilo
seksindi/ramose	village watchman
shaval	proverb
sher	tiger
shikargah	hunting circle or block in forest
shikmidari	tenant
suddhi	purification
supari	betel nut
tah-bazari	sales tax
tahsildar	revenue collector at taluka level
takavi	crop loans
taluka	sub-division of a district
talukdar, first	corresponding to collector of British district
tantric	myth/magic
than	cloth measuring sixteen yards
thana	police station
thanda	Lambada camp/settlement
thondi	oral mortgage
thugna	deceive

uruses/melas/jatara	fair and pilgrimage
Vani	trader/usurer
vanijya/banijya-kara	merchant
vanjari-van	forest
vetti	forced labour
watan	right to collect revenue
watandar	holder of watan/also jagirdar or landlord
wazir	minister
zaharabad	block quarters
zamindar	landlord

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